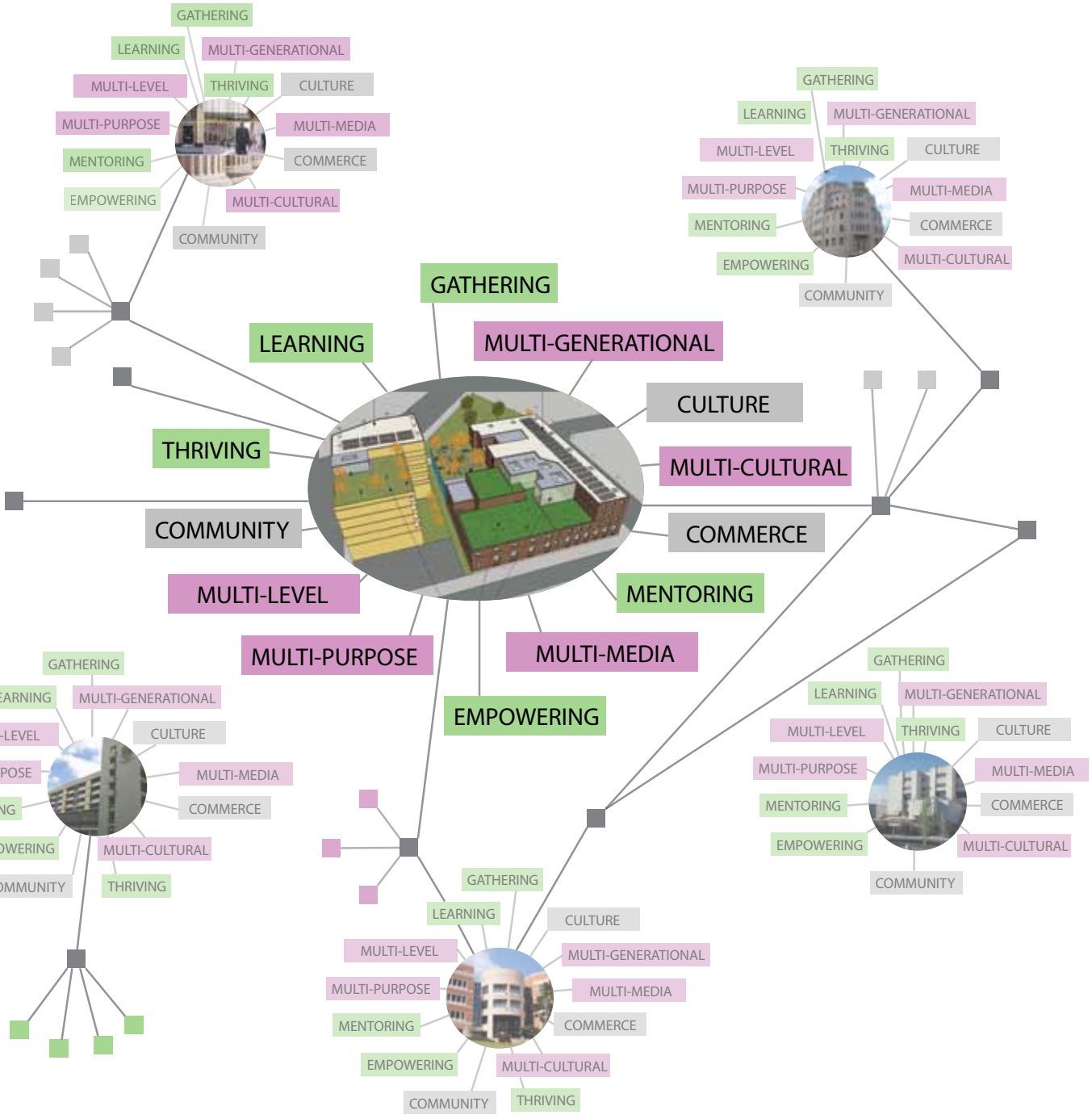
COMMUNITY MEDIA REVIEW

Community Media Centers

Connecting with the New Broadband Networks



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ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY MEDIA
1100 G Street, NW / Suite 740
Washington, DC 20005
Voice: 202.393.2650 / Fax: 202.393.2653
cmr@alliancecm.org
www.alliancecm.org

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Community Media Centers Connecting with the New Broadband Networks

UP FRONT

FEATURES

Cover art by Meridian Design Associates, Architects

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

DEBRA ROGERS
Chair
Northeast Representative Appointed
Falmouth Community Television
310A Dillingham Avenue
Falmouth, MA 02540
Voice: 508.457.0800 / Fax: 508.457.1604
E-mail: deb@fctv.org

KERI STOKSTAD
Vice-Chair
At-Large Representative
The Santa Barbara Channels
7000 Hollister Avenue
Goleta, CA 93117
Voice: 805.571.1721
E-mail: stokstad@alliancecm.org

TODD THAYER
Treasurer
At-large Representative
CAPS-TV
65 Day Road
Ventura, CA 93003
Voice: 805.658.0500 / Fax: 805.658.0505
E-mail: tthayer@captstv.org

KARLA SALDAÑA
Secretary
At-large Representative
channelAustin
1143 Northwestern Avenue
Austin, TX 78702
Voice: 512.478.8600 x22 / Fax: 512.478.9438
E-mail: karlas@channelAustin.org

RICH DESIMONE
Regional Representative
Mid-Atlantic Representative Appointed
METV
500 Main Street
Metuchen, NJ 08840
Voice: 732.603.9750 / Fax: 732.603.9871
E-mail: rjdesimone@verizon.net

JASMINE WHITE
Equal Opportunity Representative Appointed
DCTV
901 Newton Street NE
Washington, DC 20017
Voice: 202.526.7007 / Fax: 202.526.6646
E-mail: Jwhite@dctvonline.tv

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

TOM BISHOP
Central States Representative Appointed
Media Bridges
1100 Race Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202
Voice: 513.651.4171
E-mail: tom@mediabridges.org

ROSS ROWE
Midwest Representative Appointed
EGTV Channel 6
Village of Elk Grove Village
901 Brantwood Avenue
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007
Voice: 847.357.4270
E-mail: rrowe@elkgrove.org

LINDA LITOWSKY
Southwest Representative Appointed
channelAustin
1143 Northwestern Avenue
Austin, TX 78702
Voice: 512.478.8600 x18 / Fax: 512.478.9438
E-mail: lindal@channelaustin.org

DAVID MOODY
Northwest Representative Appointed
14419 Greenwood Avenue N, Suite A, #203
Seattle, WA 98133-6865
Voice: 800.885.8886 x116 / Fax: 856.866.7411
E-mail: dmoody@telvue.com

ANN THEIS
Western Representative Appointed
Denver Open Media
700 Kalamath Street
Denver, CO 80204
E-mail: ann@deproduction.org

AT-LARGE REPRESENTATIVES

KATHY BISBEE
Community Media Access Partnership
c/o Gavilan College
5055 Santa Teresa Boulevard, L139
Gilroy, CA 95020
Voice: 408.846.4983 / Fax: 408.846.4907
E-mail: kathy@mycmap.org

SUE BUSKE
The Buske Group
3001 J Street, Suite 201
Sacramento, CA 95816
Voice: 916.441.6277 / Fax: 916.441.7670
E-mail: sue@buskegroup.com

JOHN BLOCH
6 Winter Street
Montpelier, VT 05602
Voice: 802.229.4734
E-mail: john@bugleg.com

MATT SCHUSTER
Metro TV-Louisville Metro Government
527 W. Jefferson Street, Suite 600
Louisville, KY 40202
Voice: 502.574.1904 / Fax: 502.574.6371
E-mail: matt.schuster@louisvilleky.gov

MIKE WASSENAAR
Saint Paul Neighborhood Network
375 Jackson Street, Suite 250
Saint Paul, MN 55101
Voice: 651.298.8900 / Fax: 651.298.8414
E-mail: wassenaar@spnn.org

APPOINTEES

JAMES HORWOOD
Legal Affairs Appointee
Spiegel & McDiarmid
1333 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
Voice: 202.879.4002 / Fax: 202.393.2866
E-mail: james.horwood@spiegelmcd.com

LAUREE McARDLE
Diversity Seat Appointee
Arlington Independent Media
2701-C Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201
Voice: 703.524.2388 / Fax: 703.908.9239
E-mail: lauree@arlingtonmedia.org

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MILESTONES, TRANSITIONS & OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

■ COMPILED BY ROB McCAUSLAND

We proudly salute significant achievements of PEG access centers and the people who guide, manage, and use them. Please send your news to rmccausland@alliancecm.org. We will be pleased to include it in future issues!

MILESTONES

PEG Center Anniversaries

25TH ANNIVERSARY • JULY 2010
• Onion River Television, Montpelier, Vermont

NEW FACILITIES/SERVICES

JANUARY 2010 • Major facility renovations and upgrade, Ludlow Community Television, Ludlow, Massachusetts

TRANSITIONS

MARCH 2010 • Tom Bishop (executive director, Media Bridges Cincinnati and ACM national board member) and wife Liz welcomed the arrival, via adoption, of their son, Finn

MARCH 2010 • Colin Rhinesmith (community media & technology manager, Cambridge Community Television) and wife Vanessa welcomed the birth of their daughter, Lucille Rose Rhinesmith

APRIL 2010 • Shelley Wolfe was hired as executive director, Fitchburg Access Television, Fitchburg, Massachusetts

APRIL 2010 • Julie Turner was hired as executive director, Martha's Vineyard Community Television, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

MAY 2010 • Lauren Horton was hired as manager, Westford Community Access Television, Westford, Massachusetts

MAY 2010 • Sylvia Strobel was hired as executive director of the Alliance for Community Media (see sidebar, this page)

ACHIEVEMENTS

MAY 2010 • Nantz Rickard, executive director of the Public Access Corporation of DC, received a law degree from Catholic University of America's Columbia School of Law, with a certificate from the Communications Law Institute

MAY 2010 • Jul3ia Richard Astatkie, programming coordinator, Cape Cod Community Media center, South Yarmouth, Massachusetts, won the Graphic Arts Program New England/Boston Emmy for her music video, "OMG LOL." This is her second Emmy in two years. ■CMR

WELCOME TO THE ALLIANCE'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Board of Directors of the Alliance for Community Media is pleased to announce that Sylvia Strobel will become our new executive director on August 1.

Strobel is a founding partner in the entertainment law firm Lehmann Strobel PLC, where she has provided legal and business affairs services to the entertainment community since 1996. She works with a global clientele of production companies and individual artists. From 2005 to 2009, Strobel served as president and general manager of the Pennsylvania Public Television Network, where she oversaw the network operations, state funding, and grants administration for the Commonwealth's eight public television stations. Prior to founding Lehmann Strobel, she worked as corporate counsel for Twin Cities Public Television (KTCA/KTCI) in Minneapolis/St. Paul, and in business affairs at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Her education includes a BA in Biology (St. Olaf College), a Juris Doctor (Wm. Mitchell College of Law) and a Masters in Business Administration (University of Minnesota). She is chair of the national board of directors of the Alliance for Women in Media (formerly known as American Women in Radio and Television), and is a member of the National Press Club, Women in Film and Video DC, Radio Television Digital News Association, and the Federal Communications Bar Association.

Strobel currently lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where she spends a lot of time gardening and hiking. Her family will be relocating to Baltimore over the summer.

Please join the Alliance in welcoming Sylvia Strobel in July at our 2010 National Conference and Trade Show in Pittsburgh.

We have been extraordinarily fortunate to have had Greg Epler Wood serve as our interim managing director these past months. Thankfully, he will remain with us through the end of July.

From the Managing Director

Community Media's Networking Tool: Growing Up with Computers in the House

BY GREG EPLER WOOD

Greg Epler Wood (greg@alliancecm.org) consults to community media nonprofits, and has been a member of the Alliance for Community Media for 30 continuous years. Epler Wood has had experience in PEG access corporation startups, executive management, regulation, policy, advocacy, strategic planning, and community needs assessments in Iowa, Vermont, and Washington, DC. He also has had careers in teaching, program development, and management in higher education, and in professional documentary film and TV production. He shares his time—physically and virtually—between his home, family, and clients in Burlington, Vermont, and the Alliance in Washington, DC.

Here's a question for all those "analog natives" among us: Can you remember your first encounter with a personal computer? I sure do! In 1981, I purchased an Osborne 1—pre-loaded with WordStar—to compose my master's thesis. How exhilarating, but oh-so-confounding. For me, the PC was a fancy typewriter first, but secondly it was a toy and a tool whose uses were quite limited. It was fun to explore and expand with the latest software and hardware, even though they were always too slow in arriving, and hardly ever worked right.

Flash forward to today. Remember when Facebook erupted onto the scene? How about Twitter? Neither is hardware, but these software applications are just as much fun and exhilarating in their own way as my cranky primitive word processor was to me 29 years ago.

How are these disparate experiences connected to this issue of *Community Media Review?* Computer technologies and networks have grown to become more sophisticated community communication tools. Way back then, my idea of interactive communication was the hours I spent on the telephone with Osborne's technical support. Now, it's trying to figure out which social media network won't turn into a time suck!

Today, we have so many methods and reasons for communicating electronically that it is often difficult to keep the line between virtual and actual reality clear in our brains. For me, however, the line between computers and community media has always been blurred. My love affair with public access began in 1979, and my love affair with computers began a short two years later. I was a professional filmmaker, so scripting in 1983 on my new IBM portable made the real connection between computers and telling stories to others, even as my fellow Alliance board members were computerizing their access operations. Within two years after that, I was using one of the first remote, searchable, online databases available via a dial-up telephone modem, long before the Internet went public.

Speaking of the Internet, the historical connection between it and public access goes back to 1974, when the Defense Department funded what would become the Internet. In that same year, the National Science Foundation awarded monies to seven institutions to design, build, and test the delivery of public services over two-way cable systems in seven cities. Of the seven, only one—the New York University Alternate Media Center's Berks Community TV experiment in Reading, Pennsylvania—still exists and is going strong. BCTV recently began a lively new experiment in citizen journalism funded by the Knight Foundation, and relying, of course, on the same Internet that DARPA funded and then made available to the public twenty years ago.

They say what goes around comes around, but in the case of public access and the Internet, our paths have never strayed that far apart—examples abound of how we've integrated technologies to further our mission. In our view, community media is not virtual—it is real, physical, interactive, and up close and personal. We use the Internet as a tool to enhance real life and solve real local community problems.

In this issue, and also via the links on the new *CMR* website, you'll read about new (but actually not so new) marriages between PEG access, computer networks, and online applications. Step back, pause, and ponder these relationships. Then, come to our National Conference in Pittsburgh in July to press some flesh and have a "real" good time! ■CMR

From the Board Chair

How Time Flies!

■ BY DEBRA ROGERS

In 1993, my first computer was a Mac Plus. You remember—it was the one with the 9-inch monochrome CRT display. When I first attempted to go "online" via the local tech school, it was slow and confusing. I wasn't quite sure how this was going to make my life easier. My daughter Amanda was five and didn't much care for the little time I spent trying to go online.

Then along came AOL. I remember the squawk of the dial-up tone like it was yesterday. It started to sink in that maybe the Internet was something I could really use.

Attending Alliance for Community Media national conferences, I listened to Dirk Koning explain the 1's and 0's of the bit stream flowing through telecom networks and what this would mean to the future of local access centers. I listened, but hate to admit how many times my eyes glazed over.

My next computer had a color display and the dial-up had improved immeasurably. At ten years old, Amanda enjoyed playing Slingo on AOL and told everyone online when it was her birthday. Then, everyone in her Slingo game would wish her "Happy Birthday."

Time passed and e-mail became part of our daily lives. How did we live without it? With no more dial-up, we were online constantly, communicating with staff and board members and asking questions of our Alliance peers from across the country. Telephone calls gave way to e-mail and online forums. For Amanda, Slingo gave way to AOL Instant Messenger and chatting online with friends. She was 15 then, and I could have lived without all the time she was spending online.

Now, fast forward to 2010. My access center lives and breathes via the Internet. All of our programs are streamed live and many are available on demand. We have streamed programs from locations around town using a laptop and digital switcher. Our website is Drupal-based and interactive. We send out a weekly e-mail bulletin to our members publicizing our program schedule, show highlights, class listings, and weekly events. We use Facebook to promote ourselves and post videos. Alongside classes in field and studio production, we teach content management, posting your videos to the Internet, and digital editing. We have a computer center for seniors. My board of directors receives their meeting packets electronically.

Our playback system also is web-based. We allow our snowbird residents to watch selectmen meetings online all winter long from the comfort of their warm Florida condominiums. Thankfully, they never have to miss their favorite access show. They write letters to the editor of our local paper about what they saw on our channel (via our website).

I could never have imagined how broadband networks would change my life personally and professionally. The Alliance LISTSERV is an amazing resource. Answers to queries come in the blink of an eye. Need to research equipment? No problem. Want to watch or share a video? Easy. Read the newspaper or a book, or Skype with a friend. How did we live without it?

Amanda is now 22. Her last paper was on cloud computing. She lives and breathes Facebook, has a laptop, and always carries a Blackberry and an iPod Touch with her. And so do I. We Blackberry message…a lot. My daughter graduated from college on May 15 and is moving to an apartment in Boston. I read that engineers are developing technology to transmit sensation of touch over the Internet. I sure hope so, because I miss her already.

Congratulations, Amanda. ■CMR

Debra Rogers (deb@fctv.org) is the chair of the Alliance for Community Media Board of Directors and vice chair of the Northeast Region Board of Directors. Her career in community media spans 28 years, the last 15 as the executive director of Falmouth Community Television in Falmouth, Massachusetts. Rogers is the 2006 recipient of the Alliance for Community Media, Northeast Region Chuck Sherwood Leadership Award, and the 2007 recipient of the National Buske Leadership Award.

From the Guest Editor

Are Broadband Networks Just Another Phase of Our Ongoing Communications Revolution?

■ BY CHUCK SHERWOOD

What a surprise I received when recently reading the first chapter, "What Is Cable TV?" of Ralph Lee Smith's seminal 1972 classic, *The Wired Nation* (see p. 7). In the first paragraph, Smith described chatting with a high-ranking aide at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which was in the midst of an early cable TV regulation rule-making. He asked the aide, "What do you think the Commission should be doing about cable TV?" The aide sighed and waved his hand, "I don't know what we should be doing. If you get any ideas, let me know."

His next paragraph contained the surprise: "Cable television was originally called community antenna television and is still widely known as CATV. It began as a minor adjunct to the present system of over-the-air commercial broadcasting. Now often called broadband communications, it is on the verge of becoming a major medium in its own right."

The chapter's final paragraph was even more enlightening regarding the coming broadband communications revolution. Ralph looked into the future, stating:

> [It] may be that we are heading toward a single, unified system of electronic communications. "Before very long," says Brenda Maddox in a booklet entitled 'Communications: The Next Revolution,' issued by the *London Economist* on October 1, 1969, "information theory will have been brought to its logical conclusion in public communications; there will be a single unified network for all kinds of messages… separate systems for telephones, telegraph, television and data transmission will disappear. Information will flow through the network as on-off digital signals and appear as pictures, sound or print, according to the choice of those sending and receiving it."

Hold on! I thought we were just now coming into the Age of Broadband? Once again, if we don't familiarize ourselves with the details of history, we think we invented new technologies and ideas. In fact, this broadband vision of the future has been around for forty years!

This issue of *Community Media Review* focuses on community media centers connecting with the new broadband networks and how everything our centers have been doing since the early 1970s is new again. We're just better at it, with forty years of experience providing training, tools, and transmission service using better technology for community- and center-produced programming and with the ability to distribute that programming using more delivery platforms. This issue's articles also deal with the vital policy issues that will ensure funding for the local communications services we provide to individuals, community groups, organizations, institutions, and businesses.

For four decades, PEG access/community media centers have been important community service providers on cable TV systems. The only thing that has changed is the bandwidth capacity of the systems, stemming from the migration from coaxial cable to fiber and the migration from analog to digital delivery of the voice, video, and data services.

We will continue to be on the wireline and wireless broadband networks of the future. But that will happen only if we understand our valuable past and ensure our future value through our participation in the ongoing local, state, and national policy and planning processes as these broadband networks are developed all around the country. If we don't tell our story, who will?

For the past year and a half, since the passage of the Obama administration's ARRA Stimulus legislation, local access centers, municipalities, and advocacy groups have been awash in filing proposals for NTIA and RUS Broadband Stimulus grants and their BTOP and BIP funding cycles. They've also been busy with the development of the FCC's National Broadband Policy Plan, which is now headed for the Congressional sausage-making process.

We have been and will continue to be an important part of this ongoing communications revolution, whether we call it the 20th-century wired nation or the 21st-century connected planet. ■CMR

Chuck Sherwood has 35 years of experience in community media centers. As one of the pioneers in PEG access, in the mid-1970s in New York City, he co-founded the Channel L Working Group, Inc., serving as executive producer and executive director. In 1986, he became executive director of Cincinnati Cable Access Corp. In 1990, he became executive director of Cape Cod Community TV. He has served in Alliance for Community Media leadership positions on the Board of Directors and on the Northeast and Central States Region Boards. In 1999, Sherwood began his consulting career as principal of Community Media Visioning. In 2001, he also joined TeleDimensions, Inc. as a senior associate.

The Old and the New

BY RALPH LEE SMITH

Dear Friends,

When my article, "The Wired Nation," first appeared in *The Nation* on May 18, 1970, it carried a subtitle that was dropped in the book version. The subtitle read, "Cable TV is about to become America's 'National Highway' of communications. Who will run it, under whose supervision, for whose benefit?" The first sentence describes the dream and the second describes the worry.

In the first sentence, the word "Highway" is singular. The advent of broadband technology that would reach homes gave every appearance of a revolution which could end in a single communications medium capable of carrying voice, video, and information everywhere and to everyone. Two of its immediate promises appeared to be, first, breaking the grip of the major networks on television, and second, making television a viable medium for local and community communications. Both of these things were achieved with the coming of cable. Young people from New York University's Alternate Media Center and the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers (now the Alliance for Community Media) created the brand-new world of community video.

Congratulations!

Now that highway—a network of broadband communications that reaches everyone, everywhere, and can deliver everything—is just about here. The delivery technology isn't what we envisioned in 1970. It utilizes technologies that were in their infancy then. The advent of the Internet took us a long way toward solving a nagging problem of cable—workable, practical, point-to-point communications. Solving this problem was essential to building a real information highway.

Back in 1970, all of us technology-innocent dreamers believed for sure that these things would happen, and we were right. The issues involved in the second sentence of the subtitle worried us, however. The communications system we envisioned would possess almost unimaginable social and even political power. Who, indeed, would run it, under whose supervision, for whose benefit?

The answer that I proposed in *The Wired Nation* was to totally and absolutely divorce ownership of the communications system from control of what was transmitted over it. The same party should not control both. The wire facility, I said, should be operated as a common carrier with publicly regulated rates, just like the telephone companies, and even interstate trucking lines. In addition to reducing the owners' social power, this would put their economic motivation where it belonged, in maximizing usage rather than maximizing revenue through content manipulation and control.

Things didn't work out that way, but the creation and enthusiastic development of PEG channels was a giant step toward addressing the issues of control in local and community communications. The reward for your success is that you now have to deal with a lot of the same issues all over again as we address the next phase of the communications revolution. My advice is, worry. Worry as we did in 1970.

One form of manipulation and control is the power of the purse. Another is placement of channels on the system, which the operator can manipulate for his economic purposes because he is not a common carrier. I am glad to see the strong, active response of the Community Access Preservation Act.

But even if this act passes, we won't have seen the end of the issues that the broadband communications revolution will bring. And the more things change, the more they will be the same. Carry into the new age our 1970 mantra: "Who will run it, under whose supervision, for whose benefit?"

Warmest regards and best wishes to old and new friends as you take on some familiar dragons. They look like something we have all seen before! ■CMR

Ralph Lee Smith was for many years a freelance writer in the fields of public policy and communications. His article, "The Wired Nation," published in *The Nation* and expanded into a book of the same name in 1972, sparked a national dialogue on the coming of broadband communications to America. He was chairman of Publi-Cable, a civic group devoted to promoting public and educational uses of cable technology. Since his retirement, Ralph has written extensively on American folk music. His book, *Appalachian Dulcimer Traditions*, is the standard work in its field; it was originally published in 1997, and has remained continuously in print.

What's the Role of Community Media Centers in the FCC's National Broadband Plan?

BY BETH McCONNELL

Community media centers have long played a vital role in technology literacy, training, and adoption. While the hardware and software may have changed in the last several decades from analog to digital, and new distribution platforms have emerged on the Internet, the core need for community media centers remains the same: the public needs access to the tools, training, and distribution channels to make media that matters to them and their communities.

In March 2010, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued the nation's first National Broadband Plan, meant to chart an ambitious course to achieve universal broadband access, and spur the deployment of ultra-high capacity networks. (See p. 11 for excerpts from the plan).

You wouldn't know it from the plan, which doesn't contain a single mention of public, educational, and governmental (PEG) stations that I could find, but community media centers can play a critical role in implementation of its goals of creating a truly connected nation.

Establishing the United States as a leader in information technology requires policies that will expand Internet infrastructure to every home and business; modernize that infrastructure so that the "pipes" are big and fast; give users access to the equipment and the training to use it; and encourage the creation of relevant content to drive adoption. The plan contains hundreds of policy proposals to achieve these and other benchmarks.

Community media centers (CMCs) have long played a vital role in technology literacy, training, and adoption. While the hardware and software may have changed in the last several decades from analog to digital, and new distribution platforms have emerged on the Internet, the core need for community media centers remains the same: the public needs access to the tools, training, and distribution channels to make media that matters to them and their communities. Community media centers should be among the first in line to benefit from—and advocate for—recommendations that could provide funding and capacity for broadband infrastructure and adoption programs.

Anchors Aweigh: Community Media Centers as Anchor Institutions

The National Broadband Plan looks to community anchor institutions as critical to providing training programs and low-cost or free broadband access. While the plan doesn't necessarily exclude community media centers from the definition of "anchor" institutions, it falls short of singling out PEG stations, focusing instead on schools, libraries, government buildings, and hospitals. But CMCs shouldn't be discouraged by this omission, which doesn't prevent them from seeking potential resources meant for anchor institutions.

For example, the plan sets a goal that every community should have affordable access for anchor institutions to at least 1 Gbps broadband service (about 250 times more capacity than the average household connected to broadband has today). The plan also recommends transitioning the Universal Service Fund from subsidizing telephone infrastructure to broadband, proving a potential source of funds to build these networks.

Community media centers already are anchor institutions in their communities, providing a hub for youth, seniors, those of limited means, foreign-language speakers, and many others to tell their stories, share their

Beth McConnell is the executive director of the Media & Democracy Coalition, where she works to unite more than three dozen nonprofit media and telecommunications advocacy groups to fight for public interest policies. McConnell also sits on the board of Philadelphia Community Access Media (PhillyCAM), the city's burgeoning public access station. She began her career as a consumer and environmental advocate in 1993 with the Pennsylvania Public Interest Research Group (PennPIRG).

knowledge and perspectives, and give voice to those who are often not heard. These are the very populations federal broadband policy must prioritize, and indeed the plan recognizes them as such.

Imagine a city or town in which every school, library, health center, community media center, and government building was connected to the same, high-capacity broadband network, which is open to the surrounding community. The footprint of that network would likely cover a vast portion of any city or town, providing the bones of a vibrant wired community. Public access centers could partner with schools to showcase youth-created media during class. As libraries make more content available digitally, the local education access channel would have easier access to new material for innovative programming. Government access channels could not only provide coverage of council meetings, but also give the public a direct line of communication to their council members using web-based video tools.

Without a wired town, community media centers will still be a source of vital content for residents. But if the public has multiple Internet access points, plus digital skills and equipment, that content can become more vibrant and participatory.

As recommended in the plan, the FCC will soon begin a regulatory proceeding to make major changes to federal programs that distribute funds for broadband deployment. This could make available billions of dollars each year through the Universal Service Fund to connect anchor institutions. Community media centers should weigh in on those regulatory changes to ensure they are eligible for funding to be part of a wired community.

Just Add Broadband: Community Media Centers are Instant Digital Literacy Centers

Anyone who's ever been involved with a public access station knows this simple truth: give a kid equipment, some training, and a little encouragement, and there's no telling what she could create that most of us could never dream up. Few institutions have more experience empowering people to create unique, innovative content that speaks directly of their experiences than community media centers.

Research shows that a significant number of people who do not use the Internet just don't find it relevant to their lives. It may be hard for some of us to understand, but what

NATIONAL BROADBAND GOALS

Goal 1: At least 100 million U.S. homes should have affordable access to actual download speeds of at least 100 megabits per second and actual upload speeds of at least 50 megabits per second.

Goal 2: The United States should lead the world in mobile innovation, with the fastest and most extensive wireless networks of any nation.

Goal 3: Every American should have affordable access to robust broadband service, and the means and skills to subscribe if they so choose.

Goal 4: Every community should have affordable access to at least 1 Gbps broadband service to anchor institutions such as schools, hospitals, and government buildings.

Goal 5: To ensure the safety of Americans, every first responder should have access to a nationwide public safety wireless network.

Goal 6: To ensure that America leads in the clean energy economy, every American should be able to use broadband to track and manage their real-time energy consumption.

Community media advocates know better than anyone that we can't sit around waiting for traditional media outlets to make content that's relevant to people's lives—we need to create it ourselves.

reason do you have to use the technology if no online content or applications speak to you? This is particularly true for non-English speakers, who don't find many websites or applications in, say, Vietnamese, Arabic, or even Spanish.

One very effective way to solve that dilemma is for individuals in non-adopter demographics to start creating content that is relevant to them. Community media advocates know better than anyone that we can't sit around waiting for traditional media outlets to make content that's relevant to people's lives—we need to create it ourselves. So if we want non-English speakers to use the Internet, we need other non-English speakers to create video, applications, or other content. And we need programs to reach out to these communities to provide necessary training, tools, and support so they can go from learning how to use e-mail to inventing the next Skype or YouTube.

The National Broadband Plan recognizes this, and proposes creation of a National Digital Literacy Program. The program would include a Digital Literacy Corps (similar to AmeriCorps) to provide trainers; a Digital Literacy Portal; and resources to expand capacity, enhance hardware, and train personnel at community organizations.

Heavy involvement of community media centers in this project is a no-brainer. In fact, since centers have so much experience training people to use technology to create content, many could provide the models to the schools, libraries, and other community hubs singled out in the plan.

Creation of the FCC's recommended Digital Literacy Program requires Congressional action and additional federal resources. This is no easy task in today's political and economic climate. But as more policymakers from both sides of the aisle recognize the positive impact broadband has on our nation's economic competitiveness and educational attainment, we need to urge them to go beyond rhetoric and fund digital adoption programs that are proven to work.

State and Local Government: Put Community Media Centers on the Map

As part of the Recovery Act, Congress provided each state with up to $500,000 to map broadband and engage in planning and strategy for connecting their communities. As the states begin this work, they need to include community media centers in their mapping of resources, as well as consider these centers in any state or local broadband strategy.

The National Broadband Plan recommends that the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the agency that oversees the distribution of grants to states for broadband planning and mapping, use some of its excess funds to establish programs to improve computer ownership and broadband adoption in unserved and underserved areas. If NTIA adopts this recommendation, community media centers should work with relevant state agencies as they decide exactly how those funds should be spent. It may be worth investigating the opportunity for community media centers to be contracted by the state agency to run training and adoption programs, utilizing their experience working with disadvantaged communities.

The National Broadband Plan is just that: a plan. It does not create new rules, or change any existing federal policies. For certain, it sets the tone for what the policy debates at the FCC will be for the next year (or many years). But it's through these debates, and the upcoming regulatory proceedings, that we have a chance to actually define U.S. broadband policy. With community media centers playing a leading role in defining the policies of our nation's digital future, we stand a better chance of achieving a society in which all people have the chance to speak—and to be heard through media-making. ■CMR

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE NATIONAL BROADBAND PLAN

Recommendation 8.19: Congress should make clear that state, regional and local governments can build broadband networks.

Recommendation 8.20: Federal and state policies should facilitate demand aggregation and use of state, regional and local networks when that is the most cost-efficient solution for anchor institutions to meet their connectivity needs.

Recommendation 8.22: The federal government and state governments should develop an institutional framework that will help America's anchor institutions obtain broadband connectivity, training, applications and services.

Recommendation 9.3: The federal government should launch a National Digital Literacy Program that creates a Digital Literacy Corps, increases the capacity of digital literacy partners and creates an Online Digital Literacy Portal.

- Congress should consider providing additional public funds to create a Digital Literacy Corps to conduct training and outreach in non-adopting communities.
- Congress, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) should commit to increase the capacity of institutions that act as partners in building the digital literacy skills of people within local communities.
  - Congress should consider providing additional public funds to IMLS to improve connectivity, enhance hardware and train personnel of libraries and other community-based organizations (CBOs).
  - OMB consulting with IMLS should develop guidelines to ensure that librarians and CBOs have the training they need to help patrons use next-generation e-government applications.
  - Congress should consider funding an Online Digital Literacy Portal.

Recommendation 9.5: Public and private partners should prioritize efforts to increase the relevance of broadband for older Americans.

Recommendation 9.11: Federal support should be expanded for regional capacity-building efforts aimed at improving broadband deployment and adoption.
Initial grants allocated a per-state maximum of $500,000 over the course of five years for strategic planning; many states have used these grants to create state broadband task forces or hire dedicated broadband staff. States can use additional funding to continue the work begun under these initial planning grants and establish state and local adoption programs envisioned by the legislation.

Recommendation 15.6: Congress should consider increasing funding to public media for broadband-based distribution and content.
As one avenue for the funding of online content, Congress should consider creating a trust fund for digital public media that is endowed by the revenues from a voluntary auction of spectrum licensed to public television.

Congress should consider dedicating all the proceeds from the auctioned spectrum contributed by public broadcasters to endow a trust fund for the production, distribution and archiving of digital public media.

Recommendation 15.8: The federal government should create and fund Video.gov to publish its digital video archival material and facilitate the creation of a federated national digital archive to house public interest digital content.

Recommendation 15.9: Congress should consider amending the Copyright Act to enable public and broadcast media to more easily contribute their archival content to a digital national archive and grant reasonable noncommercial downstream usage rights for this content to the American people.
To address this issue, Congress should consider amending the Copyright Act to enable public and broadcast media to more easily contribute their archival content to a digital national archive. In addition to clearing these upstream rights for submission into a digital national archive, the amendment to the Copyright Act should grant the public reasonable noncommercial downstream usage rights to all materials deposited into the archive. This would ensure that archival content is open and accessible. Any synch amendment to the Copyright Act should take into account the interests of affected copyright holders.

Read the whole plan at www.broadband.gov.

Digital Redwoods: Cultivating a Sustainable Media Ecosystem

■ BY SEAN McLAUGHLIN

Access Humboldt's Digital Redwoods initiative is creating a digital ecology to build a healthy, sustainable media ecosystem for rural communities.

As old analog media structures evolve or die off, there is a sense of urgency to understand the dynamics of our human communication systems so that we can nurture and create new digital media solutions for future generations. The question remains: "How can new media inform our communities with essential information to sustain democracy for the future?" (See Resources, p. 13.)

Considering the complexity of the question, folks are struggling to find the right language to express the evolving dynamics in a comprehensive way. A popular frame of reference speaks to the digital ecology and information ecosystems at play in the marketplace of ideas.

Informing Communities

In 2009, the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy and the Aspen Institute published a report, *Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age*, identifying three key objectives:

- Maximize the availability of relevant and credible information to all Americans and their communities;
- Strengthen the capacity of individuals to engage with information; and
- Promote individual engagement with information and the public life of the community.

These objectives are embedded in the Obama administration's work to reform national media policy and advanced through the Federal Communications Commission's proceeding (GN 10-25) on the Future of Media, launched in 2010.

Digital Redwoods

On California's North Coast, Access Humboldt posed this question: "What would a healthy, sustainable media ecosystem look like for communities in our region?" And Eureka! The answer is Digital Redwoods, a vision modeled after the region's ancient forests.

Digital Redwoods is a nascent community broadband and local media initiative of Access Humboldt, based in Eureka, California. The initiative has lofty goals for sustaining democracy in remote rural communities that seek the light expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19): "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (UN, 1948).

Digital Redwoods' community broadband developments are rooted in co-axial cables and optic fibers. Dedicated wireline networks for public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access media are provided

Digital ecologist Sean McLaughlin serves as executive director of Access Humboldt, whose mission is "Local Voices Through Community Media." He is a Knight Media Policy Fellow with New America Foundation and a ZFellow with ZeroDivide. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Alliance for Communications Democracy and The Ink People Center for the Arts. He can be reached via e-mail: sean@accesshumboldt.net or telephone: 202-495-0616.

under local cable franchise agreements with the county and cities. [Special thanks to Buske Group for guiding local franchising efforts.] Local PEG network assets are deployed and interconnected with wireless transmission networks that reach remote locations for broadcast radio, television, and Internet, as well as for mobile users' broadband needs.

This digital ecology approach takes a long-term view for the growth of communication networks, both on the ground and overhead. Digital Redwoods engages local resources with any media necessary to help meet comprehensive community needs and interests for public health and safety, lifelong learning, and civic engagement.

Dedicated fiber connects community anchor locations, which serve as wireless nodes supporting a broadband mesh capability to reach distant and remote communities along with mobile users, including emergency responders. Like the ancient forest, these root and canopy networks are uniquely adapted to their particular situations (micro-climates, geography, culture, and history) to maintain community health and vitality over time.

In this vision of a media ecosystem, the towering giants of the forest are community anchors—local governments and essential institutions like schools, community media centers, libraries, public safety operations, and health care facilities. These represent the pillars of local community.

Digital Redwoods has already sprouted several innovative projects deploying community broadband media networks. By design, these projects serve public, educational, and governmental purposes and they adapt uniquely to the places and people in each community served. Projects include:

- *Digital Rio Dell*, a municipal wireless network providing redundant Internet access and media transport service for Rio Dell City Hall, public library, and volunteer fire department;
- *Access Humboldt Libraries*, a county library fiber deployment providing free public Wi-Fi access;
- *Eureka Muni-Hub*, a municipal/community fiber co-location facility with wireless transmission and interconnection capabilities; and,
- *Humboldt Community Access Network*, a proposed regional microwave project serving community anchors and land mobile radio systems for emergency responders across

RESOURCES

Access Humboldt
www.accesshumboldt.net

Alliance for Community Media
www.alliancecm.org

Digital Redwoods project
www.digitalredwoods.net

Federal Communications Commission's Future of Media
www.reboot.fcc.gov/futureofmedia

FreePress
www.freepress.net

Ink People
www.inkpeople.org

Knight Commission
www.knightcomm.org

Media Action Grassroots Network
www.mediagrassroots.org

Media and Democracy Coalition
www.media-democracy.net

National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors
www.natoa.org

Media Policy Initiative at New America Foundation
www.mediapolicy.newamerica.net

Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition
www.shlbc.org

ZeroDivide
www.zerodivide.org

Community Broadband Wireless Network of the Year

In 2009, Digital Redwoods was recognized by the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA) as Community Broadband Wireless Network of the Year. Read the press release at www.natoa.org/2009/09/natoa-announces-recipients-of-1.html. The initiative also develops and operates dedicated fiber optic network assets for public, educational, and governmental purposes.

three million acres of territory. [Special thanks to the Headwaters Fund and Columbia Telecommunications Corp. for supporting this ARRA broadband stimulus application for comprehensive community infrastructure.]

Appropriate network technologies and innovations, including cloud architecture, intelligent spectrum management, and open-source solutions, are incorporated to engage local resources in meeting real human needs. Each broadband network deployment and adoption project connects local communities where people live to other connected places in the region, as well as with virtual communities across the larger realms of human communication.

Digital Redwoods is deploying broadband communications capacity to the least-served communities for local jurisdictions that serve a wide region, covering an area larger than many states in the United States. Broadband network resources developed by the initiative are public benefit assets managed on behalf of—and accountable to—participating local communities.

Digital Redwoods is creating sustainable community broadband communication networks with dedicated fiber and wireless capacity through community anchor facilities to support robust next generation digital media applications for public safety, civic engagement, education, and other community communications purposes.

Rural Broadband Access

Digital Redwoods is designed with consideration for the digital ecology of the marketplace of ideas, and with a vision to create sustainable broadband media ecosystems that engage private investment along with resources of local communities.

Access Humboldt is an active member of national organizations that help to inform local efforts, including the Media and Democracy Coalition, Alliance for Community Media, National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, Rural Broadband Policy Group, Free Press, and Media Action Grassroots Network. All are among the leaders in national public interest policy advocacy efforts.

A promising new effort, the Media Policy Initiative at New America Foundation, is informing progress on the recommendations raised by *Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age*. And the Schools, Health and Libraries Broadband Coalition has developed a particularly strong case for community anchor networks, highlighting the need to coordinate and leverage public investment in the development of such networks.

Broadband network deployments for established community anchors maximize opportunities for carrier neutral co-location, peering, and interconnection between commercial, non-commercial, and public safety networks. This may be particularly true for remote rural communities, including many tribal lands and native populations.

Digital Redwoods is creating sustainable community broadband communication networks with dedicated fiber and wireless capacity through community anchor facilities to support robust next generation digital media applications for public safety, civic engagement, education, and other community communications purposes.

Building on a human rights foundation and following a sustainable ecosystem approach, Digital Redwoods is growing a diverse and healthy marketplace of ideas. With long-lived public, educational, and governmental anchor institutions supporting the framework, community broadband efforts can secure local access for future generations "through any media and regardless of frontiers." ■CMR

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Let's Buy the Internet: A Call To Action!

BY JENNIFER GILOMEN

In communities from San Francisco to Lafayette, Louisiana, the idea of broadband as a public utility is starting to take root, leading to civic innovation.

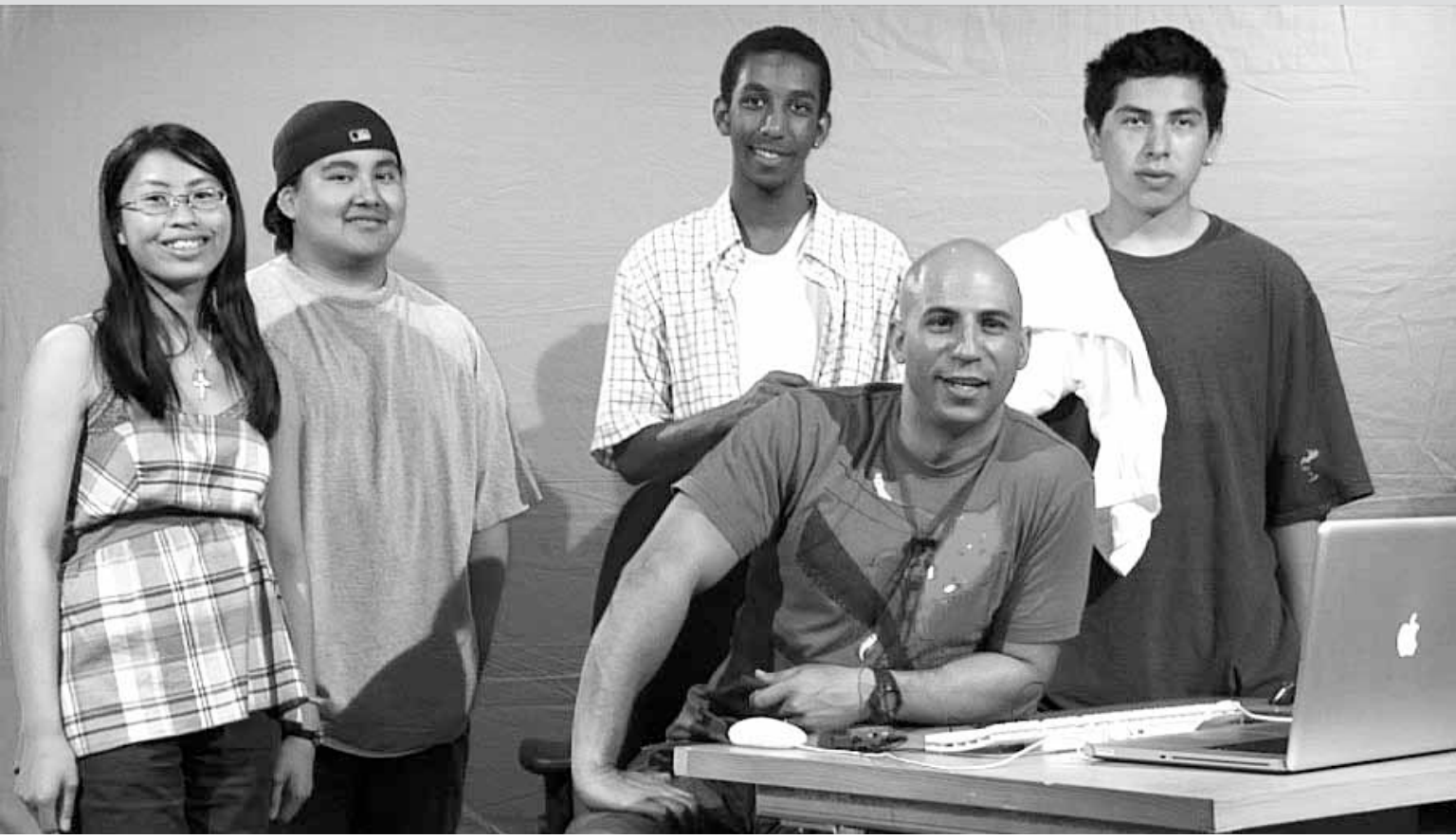
While we continue to build bridges across the digital divide for our diverse American communities, spread before us is the next digital divide, but this one is a chasm. Broadband—and more specifically, fiber optics—is not only the future communications infrastructure on which the entire delivery of Internet services will depend, it is also the present one. It's just that the infrastructure doesn't yet extend to the doorsteps of our homes, businesses, and organizations—except, of course, for those who can afford to pay a lot for it. Obtaining a fiber optic connection, and even finding a company to sell you services over it, is no easy task, even in dense urban areas.

Just ask Joey Durell, the mayor of Lafayette, Louisiana, a little town out on the bayou. For years, Durell and the city government begged communication companies to build them a fiber network—for which they were willing to pay, and over which the company could sell services to the community for years to come. Yet no company would cross the long bridge over the swamp on I-10 to come near them. Small potatoes, they figured; not a big or wealthy enough customer base to be worth it in the short term. It was a familiar story for Lafayette's elders—the same thing had happened decades prior with electricity, which arrived there many years after it came to urban areas, and set the small town behind the curve in commerce.

And so in Lafayette, something revolutionary happened: the people of the town voted to build their own Internet, and to make it a world-class network that will connect every school, home, and business in the entire town. The network will have reasonable rates for service, and the resulting revenues will go right back to the town to fund other city services. In Lafayette, broadband has become a public utility, and new businesses and high-tech firms are poised to find a welcoming, productivity-enabling home there. A community could own no greater asset than a world-class network to stimulate economic development. With kids learning high-tech skills that prepare them to be the future workforce for burgeoning local industries, Lafayette will no longer be that sleepy little bayou town. It may just become the next Silicon Valley—or, rather, the Fiber Frontier.

Here at Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC) in San Francisco, the story was a bit different. Having grappled with the repercussions of the digital divide for over three decades among our constituencies, we started thinking a few years back about the importance of that infrastructure, wishing that the Internet was more like a public cooperative than a corporation. Over the past decade, such a parallel and more sophisticated Internet Eden was being constructed: long strands of fiber that not only run along our utility poles and beneath our streets, but also beneath our oceans and around the globe. I don't know what genius figured out how to transmit data over light waves, but it was a darn good idea. Light is fast, and last time I checked, there are quite a few colors in the spectrum for data to ride on.

Over the past two decades, a group of American universities quietly constructed one of the most robust fiber optic networks in the world, National Lambda Rail (NLR), which is currently capable of speeds of up to 100 Gbps (yes, that's a G), with demonstrated speeds increasing each year. Scientists and researchers have used it to study—well, geeky science and engineering stuff requiring massive computation and speed. Through NLR and state and regional networks, hundreds of universities



collaborate and work together to advance their industries and human knowledge. And the coolest part is, they own the network, which is operated on a membership and equity model, as opposed to a commercial one.

The utopian Internet is there, and BAVC realized we could become a citizen of it. So we set out to acquire our own fiber connection to see how those speeds could enable the same type of collaboration and advancements in our business: media and social change. We obtained a connection through CENIC (the California network) and NLR, and found ourselves a lone media arts center with whopping speed of 10 Gbps. The distance across that bridge to Lafayette, however, was suddenly much smaller. Youth here in our programs began to swap stories, media, and learning with the Fiber Kids! at Carencro High School in Lafayette.

Similarly, some forward-thinking city workers here in San Francisco negotiated a franchise deal some years back with a little company called Comcast, wherein Comcast was required to put in place a 1 Gbps fiber network that connects pillar arts and culture centers and schools, fifteen in all. So far, the network has only been used for demonstrations, but we are now making the first attempts to activate it through a layer of community programming. This year, for example, we will launch a "neighborhood news network (n3)," and will train community producers in journalism skills and television news production. The network will also allow us to live-stream cultural events and receive broadcast-quality media files from the community sites on the network. We are working closely with our local government to expand the network and secure it as a publicly owned infrastructure that connects our government, institutions, and digital media organizations, strengthening our community's ability to collaborate, exchange, educate, and innovate.

But the model need not remain local. If every community media center in the country connected to each other over fiber, our communities would all benefit. Students could participate in a live lecture or collaborate on an interactive problem-solving game, producers from different hometowns could share stories with each other and find commonalities, journalists could conduct live television interviews with people across the country, and PEG centers could become hubs for civic innovation, all while maintaining the relevance

Above:
Students from the Bay Area Video Coalition's 3D gaming program in San Francisco present their work in real time with youth in Lafayette, Louisiana, via fiber-based videoconferencing and screen sharing.

and integrity of our mission to give voice to our diverse local communities.

Let's think about it in terms of communications infrastructure that we are intimately familiar with: cable. Who owns it? Cable companies, of course. Who owns the Internet? The companies who built the infrastructure. Now, pretend you're the CEO of an upscale clothing company. Where do you build your next store: near the local housing projects, or near the gated communities in the suburbs? Companies intentionally exclude potential markets in favor of others where they can make a higher profit. That's what companies do. Similarly, it turns out companies don't care to upgrade your infrastructure when they're the only game in town. So we're left to deal with crumbling copper infrastructure, and expected to pay whatever they're charging. We wouldn't let companies own our public highways and waterways, so why would we allow companies to own and manage the most critical infrastructure on which our communications, education, business, civic, health, and government depend?

The key issue here is ownership; with ownership comes control and sustainability. Think of it as the difference between renting versus owning your building. Without "rent control" on broadband, and with such limited competition in the marketplace of infrastructure, service providers can (and do) raise rates on substandard services whenever they like. Likewise, if community media loses the net neutrality debate, we'll experience the digital chasm on both ends, with corporations "channel slamming" noncommercial media by throttling our bandwidth and that of our users. As more and more media moves to the Internet, equity in the infrastructure is becoming of paramount importance to our collective existence.

It's too bad we don't have access to capital funding so we could become owners—instead of renters—of our communications infrastructure. But wait! We're PEG! One of the few things many of us do have is access to capital funding, and we can use it to purchase critical infrastructure on which to sustain and strengthen our local governments, organizations, and communities. So, let's buy our own Internet. Who's with me? ■CMR

Jen Gilomen is director of public media strategies at the Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC), working to develop innovative initiatives for public media production, distribution, education, and collaboration. She is currently leading BAVC's first foray into public access television station operations. Gilomen has acted as a strategic, technical, and creative advisor for nearly one hundred independent producers and nonprofit organizations, managed programs for community media and innovation, and produced nationally and internationally distributed documentary films.

BronxNet's Approach to the Next Generation of Community Access Places

BY MICHAEL MAX KNOBBE AND BICE C. WILSON

Many of the possibilities only dreamt of in the 1970s by early pioneers of interactive media and public access are now becoming possible with the advent of multi-directional interactive civic participation, ubiquitous content generation, and multi-point origination and distribution.

Perhaps most significantly, a new urgency has arisen for spreading media literacy and access to the tools necessary for participation in contemporary civic and economic life. This urgency stems from the realization that digital media will be the context for much of community, cultural, and commercial interchange for the foreseeable future.

In this article, we will explore the way these evolutionary trends are changing the mission of access organizations, and thereby fundamentally changing the nature of the public access/community media center. Here are some of the questions we look at:

- How can community media centers integrate with existing creative economy, knowledge industry, and human services institutions in a community?
- Are there economic models that can both attract adequate capital funding to create a facility that serves the broadest spectrum of community needs, while also assuring reliable, sustainable operating funds for community access facilities?
- How can community media organizations serve the long-term needs of nonprofits with only short-term programmatic funding, especially when those needs require scalability as well as major capital facilities?

BronxNet has been exploring these questions as it maps out and implements its long-range planning.

BronxNet's 12-year Strategic Plan

BronxNet is an independent not-for-profit public access center located on the beautiful campus at Lehman College in the Bronx—a borough of more than 1.4 million people, and one of the nation's most diverse counties. The organization has experienced tremendous growth in demand for its training and media access services, and is functioning at capacity. BronxNet is working with Meridian Design Associates to formulate and realize a 12-year strategic business plan and the related design strategy for the next generation of community access places in the Bronx. The basis for this strategic plan is a 2008 Community Needs Assessment conducted by TeleDimensions, Inc.

The plan calls for:

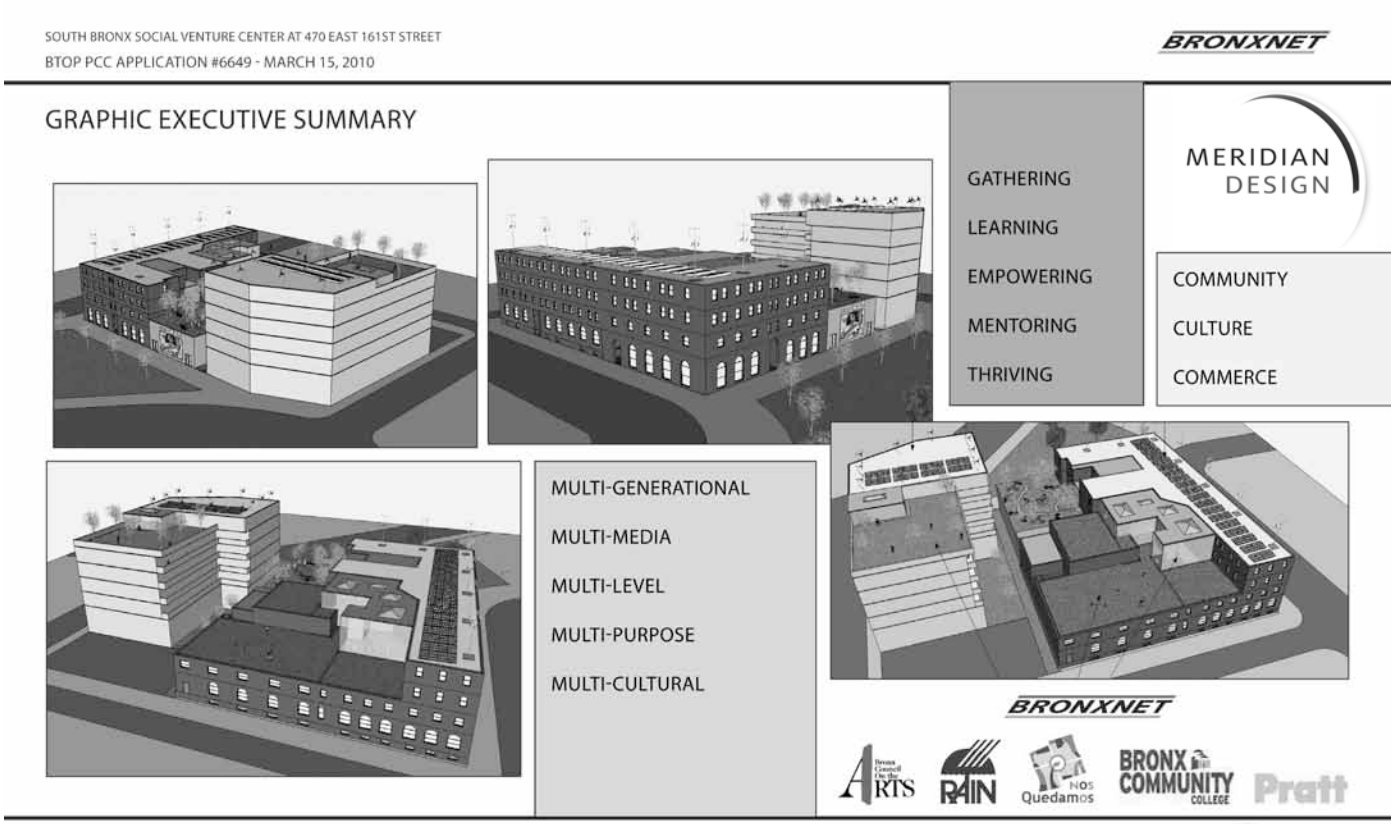
- BronxNet providing technical assistance and training services to existing anchor institutions throughout the Bronx, enabling them to integrate ICT resources into their services and operations.
- Upgrading the existing BronxNet studios and operations center at Lehman College.
- Creating multiple points of accesss, including:
  - A South Bronx BronxNet facility
  - An East Bronx constellation site, and
  - Media-capable spaces for young people in partnership with schools and youth organizations.

One of the first steps toward these goals has been BronxNet's proposal to develop the South Bronx Social Venture Center (SBSVC). The business plan for SBSVC and the resultant design address all of the questions above.

South Bronx Social Venture Center

The proposed location for the SBSVC is in what once was the civic heart of the South Bronx—the district that became infamous

Assessing community needs has led BronxNet to develop a long-term plan to provide the borough's residents with greater community access.



Provided courtesy of Meridian Design Associates, Architects

for arson and urban decay in the 1970s. This neighborhood is now densely populated and growing, encompassing thousands of new units of housing and the new campus of Boricua College.

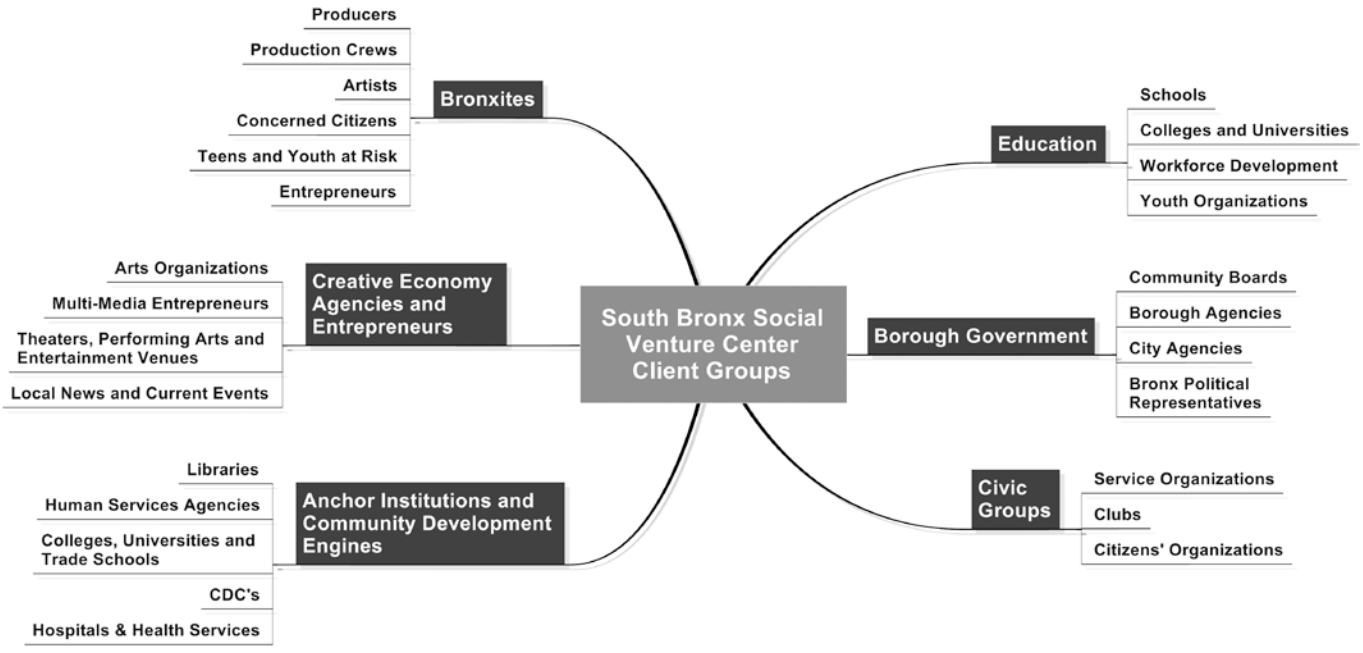
BronxNet proposes the adaptive re-use of the former Bronx YMCA building—most recently a state juvenile detention facility—to reawaken and re-establish the site as a positive engine for community connectivity, prosperity, innovation, and well-being.

The 100,000 square feet at SBSVC will be dedicated to those social ventures whose services are essential to strengthening the sustainability and development of its catchment area. This will be a crossroads for school children, at-risk youth, and college students, aspiring journalists, media producers, and technologists, and nascent leaders and entrepreneurs. SBSVC will serve as a gathering place and as a gateway to the creative economy, including livelihoods in the knowledge and human services industries. The center's programs and shared resources have the potential to significantly increase community, cultural, and commercial development in its environs.

A Marketplace Full of Shared Resources

SBSVC's business model is the archetypal marketplace—a dedicated place where the creative economy, knowledge industry, and human services sectors can gather to build their community, cultural, and commercial economies, and thereby enhance their well-being. The center's educational and workforce development programs will include a small business mentoring program to help citizens inspired by its programs create thriving businesses.

The new careers and businesses SBSVC's services will engender will happen throughout the Bronx, with a concentration in households and commercial spaces in the center's immediate neighborhood.



SBSVC's Client Groups

As in any marketplace, the gathering place itself is permanent, while the services and goods available to the public will change as the needs of the encompassing communities evolve. Certain demographic needs will be perpetual: there will be children to raise, youth to guide as they find their way in the world, elders to care for and learn from. There will be a need for skills building and mentoring, for community access to education, technology, studios, social networks, and workspaces not found in the typical home.

The building will be BronxNet's South Bronx Constellation site, with a large public assembly space, multi-media gallery, and community media training and production center. More than half of the building will be Media Flex-Space, set up for ubiquitous content capture and high-bandwidth connectivity, with shared classrooms, gathering spaces, and human and technical resources that each partner will be able to flexibly schedule.

SBSVC's partner institutions will have on-site community access offices—walk-in spaces sharing the first floor lobby where Bronxites can connect with opportunities and receive mentoring as they shape their skill-sets and develop their talents.

In SBSVC's model, the partners are not burdened by long-term fixed costs, and they are also able to readily allow their spatial needs to ebb and flow as their services evolve.

SBSVC's design provides flexible tenant spaces matched with a complement of shared resources, such as ICT infrastructure, social spaces, skilled support staff, and so forth—all tailored to current and projected needs of these entities.

Capital Projects are Sexy. Operations—Not So Much

Over and over we hear it: Donors give big grants and gifts for capital projects, but no one wants to fund operations and maintenance.

In fact, many capital projects funded by economic development monies aren't even expected to have a sustainable revenue model—many notable facilities are built before they have a business plan, which can be a pathway to failure. Capital projects need a model for sustainability if they are to thrive.

In planning your next capital project, have you devised a pro-forma analysis that models the sustainability of your place over the course of its life?

How Needs Become Places

There is a process for transforming needs into places where needs are fulfilled:

- An enterprise identifies a need that it can meet or is mandated to meet.
- The enterprise then determines a strategy for serving that need.
- That strategy suggests a business plan, describing processes needing people, tools, and resources, as well as the capital and actions required in order to mobilize to serve the needs identified. Note that a successful strategy also includes the revenue and operating cost model that will sustain those processes.
- That business plan is translated into an architectural program—a quantitative and qualitative description of the places required for the enterprise to thrive.
- That architectural program defines the mission that the design and construction team must fulfill in crafting a place.
- As the business plan evolves over time, so must the architectural program, and hence the places where the enterprise develops evolves as well.

Both nonprofit organizations and for-profit corporations can benefit from this approach, and by engaging an architectural firm experienced in public media-capable spaces early in the process.

The needs assessment and resultant business plan must be taken seriously to adequately use them to judge and shape the places an organization needs to thrive. When a place is created, it then becomes the business plan. Since the place constrains what the enterprise can do, it gives rise to what we call architectural determinism: Your enterprise is constrained by your places, rather than your enterprise shaping your places.

When was the last time you cross-checked your business model against the facility that houses it? Who is controlling whom in that equation?

SBSVC's Business Model and Architectural Program

The design of the South Bronx Social Venture Center has its roots in a sustainable business model. Here are some key elements:

- BronxNet has long-term revenues from cable-related support for its public access mission. It can therefore acquire financing that many nonprofits cannot, and it will provide capital for the development of SBSVC.
- BronxNet has attracted preliminary partnering commitments for the use of the shared resources in the facility from eight long-standing community anchor institutions. Each of them needs programmatic space and resources; all would benefit from co-location in the same campus.
  - SBSVC's design provides flexible tenant spaces matched with a complement of shared resources, such as ICT infrastructure, social spaces, skilled support staff, and so forth—all tailored to current and projected needs of these entities.
  - In return for their rents and fees paid to SBSVC, partners and tenants will be provided access to space and resources that they could not afford to capitalize on their own.
  - Each partner will be a member of the advisory board responsible for coordinating SBSVC programs and resources.
  - Each partner will be responsible for raising the program funding required to operate the programs they organize, while all partners will collaborate and coordinate to assure that funding for SBSVC as a whole covers near- and long-term needs.
  - SBSVC and its partners will establish an endowment and solicit funding for subsidizing the use of the facility by entry-level users, students, and other groups for whom SBSVC will be a gateway to new careers and creative opportunities.
- These same Media Flex-Spaces will serve to leverage the capabilities and capacities

of the spaces at SBSVC dedicated for BronxNet's use.

- Revenues that come from building rents, grants, underwriting, fee for service production work, distribution, and other initiatives will provide funding for sustaining the organization, enhancing program activities, and broadening access.
- Key to this model is the assumption that the names of the center's partners may change and their missions will evolve as the cultural and commercial fabric of the community evolves. The South Bronx Social Venture Center, with its marketplace model, is designed to evolve with them.

We believe that the model we have devised addresses the issues at hand:

- SBSVC is deeply integrated with existing creative economy, knowledge industry, and human services institutions and markets in its community.
- The center has a detailed pro forma analysis establishing that it can attract capital and generate operating revenues so as to be sustainable.
- Its combination of a long-term anchor tenant like BronxNet and a diverse and evolving group of community anchor institutions provides a context for those partners to scale and develop their programs without undue capital and long-term operating cost burdens.

The South Bronx has resurged from urban blight and is experiencing terrific population growth and development; however, approximately 40 percent of residents remain below the poverty line. It has the lowest broadband adoption rate in New York City. South Bronxites have called for new opportunities for public access to civic engagement, training, media access, ultra-local information, workforce development, community identity, and democracy. The SBSVC has been designed to address these needs in the context of our changing physical, economic, political, and technological landscapes.

Developed in concert with key community partners, offering scalable facilities for their engines for development, SBSVC will represent a key step in realizing a comprehensive forward-thinking broadband policy to realize 21st-century PEG media services, and may offer a model for others.

To see a detailed presentation of the South Bronx Social Venture Center, go to www.bronxnet.org/sbsvc.html ■CMR

Michael Max Knobbe (max@bronxnet.org) is an innovative media leader and exemplar social entrepreneur. Since 2002, he has served as executive director of BronxNet (www.bronxnet.org), the public access television station programming six channels reflecting the diversity of the Bronx. This organizational shaman has spearheaded training and access to thousands of Bronxites and students, contributing to workforce and community development through media.

As one of the founding principals of Meridian Design Associates (www.meridiandesign.com), a 30-year-old project management, architecture, and planning firm, Bice C. Wilson has had a hand in the evolution of the multi-media workplace for diverse clients, from major broadcasters to local access corporations. Wilson's practice includes strategic planning and business change processes, architecture, urban design, and project management. His blog is http://meridian-place-making.blogspot.com.

Bronxites have called for new opportunities for public access to civic engagement, training, media access, ultra-local information, workforce development, community identity, and democracy in the South Bronx. The SBSVC has been designed to address these needs in an open scalable way.

Protecting Free Speech in a "Money Talks" World

BY RITA STULL

How do we pay for and train people to speak in an era that requires devices and infrastructure beyond shouting in the town square? How can we protect the right to speak in a bewilderingly high-tech culture?

In 1790, when the Free Speech Amendment was adopted, four million people lived in the United States. Newspapers, letters carried by the Post Office, meetings, a soapbox on the town square, and talking at local markets and over the back fence summed up the major methods of discourse. The notion of "paying" for individual and free or "political" speech was not an issue.

In 2010, in order to sustain democracy, we must communicate, not just with four million Americans, but with 330 million Americans, as well as the over six billion people populating the world. We must speak, not just about local and political matters from the soapbox in the town square or via rapidly disappearing local newspapers, but about interdependent commerce, economies, jobs, finances, transportation, and managing the earth's finite resources.

Fast-forward to electronic speech via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, videos—where you need a device to convert speech into digital bits for carriage on integrated wired/wireless infrastructures. Voice, video, and data are now disseminated via the Internet, which is transported on networks that link phone, cable, fiber, cellular, satellite, broadcast, and wireless technologies. This integrated whole of telecom technology renders anachronistic the stand-alone letters, soapboxes, and Post Office deliveries characteristic of earlier eras. Most important, technology places a *cost* on individual speech. You have to *buy* devices and carrier services in order to speak.

How do we pay for and train people to speak in an era that requires devices and infrastructure beyond shouting in the town square? How can we protect the right to speak in a bewilderingly high-tech culture? What can we do to restore a democratic balance to quality of life when a tiny minority have most of the wealth and use it to control speech content and its delivery systems? How can we create a world unencumbered by the shackles of corporate control over how much speech costs and who will have access?

Since the early 1980s, massive telecom deregulation has created powerful monopolist markets. In the late 1940s, the FCC's Fairness Doctrine ensured that viewers were exposed to a diversity of viewpoints, instead of just those of the broadcast network owners; this was abolished in the late 1980s. In the 1970s, cable television operators were required to provide public, educational, and governmental access (PEG) channels, facilities, equipment, training, and funding, in addition to franchise fees, as payment for use of the public right of way. PEG requirements also ameliorated the fact that a cable company becomes a local monopoly controlling many programming channels. Today, we once again see that fairness and access are under attack as some states take over cable franchising and eliminate—or significantly curtail—PEG funding requirements.

Access Protects the Right to Speak

Why require PEG access? Because public access protects the individual's right to speak; educational access protects the individual's right to learn to use media to speak; and government access protects the public's right to know what's going on or is being said in each community. PEG access protects localism: local journalism, local culture, and local public safety, health, and welfare in an evolving video-graphic centric communications world. This world requires fiber infrastructure with its unlimited capacity to support non-discriminate carriage of all communications.

Future trends suggest that Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) will overtake traditional cable service, and subscriber numbers will decline as carriers migrate to using the Internet for TV/entertainment services. Further, Internet, digital, and fiber convergence renders obsolete old regulations, which were based on analog carriage of information on copper phone and cable lines. Regulations protecting the public interest in our new, converged digital-Internet-fiber world are virtually non-existent.

Technology is neutral—it doesn't care who owns it or how it's used. Unfortunately, past *legal language*, which

We now know that laws focusing on what is *instead of* what may become *reality are a sham. It's clear with the transformational convergence of digital, fiber, and the Internet, that telecom's existing legal definitions have been rendered moot.*

defines communications content, ownership, technologic capacities, capabilities, costs, markets and access, is not readily neutralized. Of particular note in a "money talks" world: *revenue streams for all free speech venues will decline, especially for PEG access, which is tied wholly to cable television.*

Arguably, speech is the human currency that sustains community. In the 21st century, we need to use some kind of technical infrastructure to speak. Regulatory schemes protecting PEG access funding in cable franchises have been rendered as obsolete as copper-based phone and cable technology. Existing regulations allow the industry to continuously increase rates for inadequate services carried on 1880s copper wire technology. Thus, obsolescence generates profits at the expense of the nation's need to deploy fiber-wireless infrastructure—an infrastructure as essential to transporting speech in the 21st century's information age as highways were to transporting products in the last century's industrial age.

Why do we need integrated fiber/wireless networks to protect free speech? Those promoting wireless as a stand-alone, high-tech solution neglect to consider the fact that wireless infrastructure goes to ground to connect to the world: transmissions must be backhauled via some landline infrastructure—be it twisted-pair phone, coaxial cable, or fiber optics—with fiber's unlimited capacity being far superior. Wireless is a complementary technology, not a competitive one. The nation needs fiber/wireless infrastructure that reaches every home and business, in rural as well as urban areas, serving the poor and the affluent, supporting stationary and mobile communications. Democracy cannot thrive unless everyone has the affordable, accessible fiber infrastructure required for speech in a high-tech world.

Telecom Business Licensing

I envision a transitional regulatory approach to dealing with explosive technologic changes that affect our speech rights. Communities could institute a *local telecom business licensing* process—meaning any company seeking to carry voice, video, data, or Internet services must acquire a telecom business license which grants access to all the customers or the telecom market within each community. A local telecom business license would be required no matter whether the technology used is landline, wireless, or satellite. Telecom business licenses can be thought of as telecom market regulatory neutrality, or local laws that:

- Create a competitive local telecom market
- Remain technology neutral
- Treat incumbent and emerging providers fairly, and
- Protect public assets, access, and free speech rights.

Cost of the telecom business license would be computed as a percentage of gross revenues collected from transporting all communications within the community. *Local governments would, by law, dedicate a portion of business license fees for PEG access, media technology/workforce training centers, and research projects to ensure entrepreneurial development of continuously emerging, public interest applications.*

In addition to a business license, anyone using the right of way (ROW), the nine feet of publicly owned land on each side of four million miles of America's roads, would pay rent based on linear feet occupied. ROW fees ensure responsible management and compensation and for use of public land, while protecting those carriers that don't need access to the market, but are just passing through from one point to another.

By granting telecom business licenses, local governments and carriers will no longer have to negotiate about modems, or whether services are voice, video, data, or Internet, or whether twisted pair, coaxial cable, fiber, wireless, or satellite technology is used, or whether there is adequate funding for PEG access. Nor will jurisdictions have to engage in the impossible exercise of foreseeing development of new technologies and forecasting potential adverse impacts on individual speech rights. Telecom business license fees provide dedicated, ongoing, sustainable funding for PEG access, thus ensuring that the

public, as well as the private sector, enjoys the benefits of technologic advances.

Conclusion

Interesting dilemmas: telecom networks and content ownership, PEG access, profits, and freedoms. We now know that laws focusing on *what is* instead of *what may become* reality are a sham. It's clear with the transformational convergence of digital, fiber, and the Internet, that telecom's existing legal definitions have been rendered moot. It's time to develop transformational regulations that keep pace with technologic growth—regulations that protect and fund free speech beyond the town square all the way to fiber's invisible light waves and beyond. ■CMR

Rita R. Stull is president of TeleDimensions, Inc. (www.teledimensionspublicsector.com) and is a specialist in designing telecom plans for local governments. Her 27 years of public sector experience includes enforcing cable franchises, conducting needs assessments, implementing public, educational, and governmental access and institutional networks, integrating telecom within municipal operating and economic development departments, training staff, and restructuring delivery of public services. In the 1980s, Stull acquired a telecom planning grant from the John and Mary Markle Foundation to develop the first local area network plan for a major city. As a result of her work in the regulatory arena, Stull testified on behalf of the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors at the U.S. Senate Public Hearings opposing legislation leading up to passage of the 1984 Cable Act. Stull presents educational seminars and helps communities identify initiatives needed to compete in a 21st-century, Internet-dependent, global economy.

Designing and Implementing a Sustainable Broadband Adoption Program for Residents of Senior Housing

BY DON S. SAMUELSON, SARAH HOIT, AND ANDREW LOWENSTEIN

Why are so many seniors still not online? This question is particularly relevant when considering the low Internet penetration rates in senior living and affordable housing communities. Whereas approximately 52 percent of the 41 million Americans aged 65 years and older go online, it is estimated that less than 10 percent of seniors in independent/assisted living communities use the Internet and less than 5 percent of seniors in affordable housing do so.

Many seniors remain on the wrong side of the digital divide because they do not see the benefits or relevance of the Internet to their daily lives. The founders of MyWay Village, a Massachusetts-based senior services company, had a vision three years ago that if seniors could be persuaded to connect with each other and their families online, this would not only impact their quality of life, but also that of their entire families and extended community.

After piloting the Connected Living program in 24 senior living communities, MyWay Village has proved that broadband adoption programs for seniors can succeed dramatically if they incorporate a comprehensive, senior-friendly approach, as outlined further in this article. In many communities, Connected Living—combining simplified online applications, engaging training and content, and high-touch support—increased adoption from an average of 4 percent to over 50 percent.

Moreover, the program achieved these results while helping to build more vibrant communities, engaging residents in "brain healthy" activities, fostering intergenerational communication, and creating new community identities. Several community administrators have commented that, rather than isolating seniors in computer labs or their rooms, Connected Living has actually *increased* offline interpersonal connections.

Case Study: Designing and Implementing an Adoption Program

How has Connected Living generated such high adoption rates? A main insight into successfully designing and implementing an adoption program is that crossing the digital divide is a process, not a single act. The program integrates seven different steps, several of which are more effective if facilitated by an on-site educator, such as a trained Connected Living Ambassador, and by a systematic education and training program.

Connected Living attracts trainees by successfully explaining Internet benefits to a senior and then leading him or her through a personalized learning program comprised of individual assessment, group classes, videos and printed materials, and access to a supervised computer lab. The program stays relevant by focusing on each user's individual needs and delivering new skill sets that meet those needs. Most important, the program provides in-person or phone support every step of the way.

The Connected Living program consists of the seven steps outlined below.

Connected Living Ambassadors provide individualized instruction and support.

Step 1: ATTRACT (Awareness Raising and Internet Evangelism)

Many seniors do not understand the benefits of being connected, and the right awareness campaign makes it clear how being connected would be very meaningful to their lives.

Awareness campaigns focus on specific benefits, i.e., "stay in touch with your grandkids," "learn more about your Medicare benefits" or "meet fellow residents with interests similar to yours." Multi-faceted campaigns engage the full range of potential users and generally include: meetings with community staff and resident councils; mailings to community members; and a launch party and ongoing post-launch activities, such as open computer labs, monthly memoir challenges, incentive programs, and discussion groups.

Step 2: ASSESS (Interests and Skill Levels)

In the assessment stage, a program staff member works one-on-one with each resident or uses small groups to discover each individual's capabilities and priority needs. New users come to the Connected Living program with a wide range of computer experience and physical capabilities. Some community residents have typed eight hours a day at their prior jobs, while others have never used a keyboard or have physical impediments that prevent them from using any input device other than a touch screen. Priority need—the communication or information-gathering purpose that governs why the user wants to learn to use the Internet—can also vary greatly. Typical needs include: connecting with children and grandchildren, sending and receiving e-mail messages, accessing information on Medicare/Medicaid/Drug programs, accessing government financial support programs, and connecting to hobbies and interest groups.

During this assessment stage, pairing the resident with an Internet coach helps to personalize the experience. This comfort level is further developed through user participation in discussion groups and ongoing encouragement from family members, community staff, and peers as seniors learn new communications tools.

Step 3: TRAIN (Introductory Computer and Internet Skills)

In this stage, the program helps seniors develop foundation Internet and "learning-to-learn" skills so that they have the capacity and sustained motivation to develop their own journeys on the Internet. These training sessions are tailored to each user's priority needs, and instructors can train users in any software/systems they desire to learn. However, after instructing several thousand seniors, MyWay Village has found it immensely useful to begin by teaching the Connected Living portal.

The easy-to-learn portal enables seniors to experience all of the advantages of the Internet with a minimal amount of training. The Connected Living home page is designed to give users a simple starting point for their Internet education, with large, highly visible buttons for navigation and a clear context for advancing through the site. It illustrates the benefits and applications available on the Internet in an introductory, controlled environment.

Through the portal's simplified applications, users get an immediate sense of Internet benefits, continuing the awareness-raising process. They can:

- send and receive e-mail messages with friends and family
- upload, view, and share photos
- listen to music and radio programs
- play a variety of games
- access and explore the Internet
- write, read, and comment on daily events in diaries and memoirs, and
- keep track of appointments in a calendar.

These activities represent core Internet applications of interest to seniors.

The portal's social networking functions allow users to connect and communicate with one another and with friends and family around the world. Families can share photos and videos and can communicate with one another on a private message board. In addition, users can communicate via video chat, an application of special interest to seniors who are grandparents. Each of the Connected Living applications is designed to help users develop foundation Internet skills, taking into consideration common senior problems related to vision and dexterity, and the challenges of developing the skills to operate Internet applications.

The one-on-one instruction is supplemented with group activities, handouts, and other offline and online training materials. The individual sessions with the program staff are used to provide particularized assistance for the skills relevant to the individual senior.

Step 4: EVALUATE (Assessing Past Learning—Planning For The Future)

The objective of the initial training is to create a foundation of skills. The senior should demonstrate basic computer knowledge and have the capacity to use e-mail and access the Internet. To spur the senior to accomplish these goals, some Connected Living programs reward him or her with an incentive, such as a discounted computer. So the evaluation not only determines whether the individual trainee has achieved a base-level of competence, but also helps to set the user up for further success.

The skill metrics that are measured include:

- being confident about the basic operation of the computer
- using the mouse to move the cursor to specific locations on the screen
- performing mouse functions like clicking and dragging
- sending and receiving e-mail
- accessing the Connected Living home page and the basic applications
- accessing and using Google for simple Internet searches
- using a search engine to locate websites and information
- navigating from the home page to content locations on websites
- attaching a document and photo to an e-mail
- locating and playing online games, and
- communicating with friends or family using e-mail.

This is a situation similar to preparing for and taking driver's license tests, where it is useful to "train to the test." The goal is to motivate the senior to sufficiently prepare for and pass a basic competence evaluation.

Step 5: INDIVIDUALIZE (Development of Personalized Internet Discovery Plans)

Up to this point in the program, most of the instruction builds foundation Internet skills—the two educational goals are developing the motivation to learn and mastering computer/Internet basics. This stage starts the user's lifelong journey on the Internet. The user, with the coach's help, now concentrates on the particular reasons that he or she is using the Internet and focuses on the applications and training materials of greatest interest to him or her.

During this phase, users have access to personal coaching, as well as additional group classes, computer lab sessions, online and video instruction, and access to the online Connected Living Center and Help Desk. During this period, the on-site staff functions less as instructors and more like librarians as they help the residents continually adjust to their experiences, skill levels, and changing interests. MyWay Village has well-developed, moderated group discussion topics for residents that involve the development and use of Internet skills to expand on the elements of the discussion. A library of video and printed materials explains all parts of the education and training programs. Affinity groups are promoted among the residents on topics of interest or specific skill areas like the use of blogs and chats, video cameras, and the other Internet-based technologies. These affinity groups will develop within the two-year period covered by the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant proposal submitted by MyWay Village this spring (see p. 31).

Step 6: INTEGRATE (Utilizing Computers and the Internet in Daily Living)

Connected Living is not just a website or computer program—it is a way of enhancing one's life and remaining engaged in family and community issues, public affairs, and whatever interests the user has had in the past or may develop in the future.

Weekly discussion groups, led by program staff, provide users with regular group meetings on topics of interest to seniors, activities, games, entertainment, and continual explanation of new applications that seniors elsewhere have enjoyed. All community members have access to intellectually stimulating, regular group meetings which promote a greater appreciation of everything that community members have in common, as well as their unique differences. Discussing the challenges and successes that individual seniors have with their Internet experiences enables the benefits of broadband connections to be shared in a group setting or network, reinforces the feeling of peer support (that "everyone can do this"), and creates a sense of pride and group purpose.

Step 7: SUBSCRIBE—Evidencing Support

Ultimately, one goal of Connected Living is to demonstrate to the managers and residents of low-income housing communities that subscribing to an Internet service creates values that should become a budgetary priority. One of the easiest market outcomes to measure is the number of residents in a community who subscribe to their own broadband accounts. Other metrics include participation in Connected Living group classes, membership in community organizations, completion of online community surveys, and many more. MyWay Village also measures application usage, calls to the Connected Living center, and many other metrics which the company shares freely with member communities.

Indicative Adoption Results

To illustrate the potential of the Connected Living program to increase adoption, MyWay Village measured usage of its applications in nine assisted-living communities in the Chicago area. By December 31, 2009, the program had raised adoption (defined as active usage of the Connected Living social network application) from less than 5 percent (approximately 100 out of 1,950 residents) to 44 percent (887 out of 2,028 residents). In 2010, adoption in many communities exceeded 50 percent, and it continues to rise.

In the above cases, broadband Internet adoption rose through a combination of factors, including the augmentation of existing senior living community infrastructure with additional computers and wireless network access, active marketing and awareness-building campaigns to community residents and their families, the offer of optional no-cost individual instruction for residents, and the introduction of regular classes with an engaging curriculum.

As anticipated, users bonded with the program through initial one-on-one interviews that identified their particular priority interests and experiences. They further bonded during classes where learning and discovery was a group event. In addition, entering self-authored profiles on the Digital Community Directory created an instant network of seniors with similar interests.

Modification of Connected Living Program for Publicly Funded Grants

In the spring of 2010, MyWay Village collaborated with affordable housing and Internet adoption expert Don Samuelson to submit a BTOP Round 2 Sustainable Broadband Adoption grant application for the state of Illinois. The application—to introduce adoption programs to 23 public/subsidized housing communities and neighborhoods in Northern Illinois—reflects MyWay Village's core insights into the adoption process.

For the Illinois BTOP application, MyWay Village modified Connected Living to create a public sector model that can serve as an evidence-based demonstration for the nation's 3,300 public housing authorities. Specifically, the collaborators increased the hours of individual one-on-one instruction from ambassadors, instituted a proficiency evaluation to ensure that each user "earns" a subsidized computer, and augmented support programs from the Connected Living Center.

Other changes strengthen data gathering and outcome tracking for deeper post-program evaluation. For the BTOP application itself, the applicants conducted extensive surveys of the user populations. The resulting plan includes 1) the development of a baseline community and user information; 2) an intervention program that attracts, trains, and rewards trainees; and 3) an evaluation of all elements of the successful (or unsuccessful) interventions.

Conclusion

We have found that Connected Living outperforms other broadband education and adoption programs for four key reasons. However, these insights are not difficult to incorporate into other initiatives.

First, the program is relationship-centered (instead of technology-centered) from the user's point of view. The program staff focuses on each user's needs and background

to introduce technology in a personally relevant manner. All technical training is done on an individual basis, rather than in a group setting—which is why many senior-focused training programs fail.

Second, the program offers multiple layers of support (individual, family, neighbor, community) in which each constituent reinforces the others' desire to participate. Yet the major driver is the gradually revealed self-interest of the new user, which is coupled with the group experience, offline and online materials, and personalized support and assistance.

Third, Connected Living incorporates complementary offline and online experiences. What is done online parallels external program activities (meeting with community members, discussing and researching interests, discussion groups, etc.), so social networking and information gathering online becomes comfortable and familiar.

Fourth, the Connected Living instruction program is designed to promote consistent opportunities for building feelings of success at every point in the process with every user. This personalized, non-overwhelming learning process with built-in reinforcement builds self-esteem and encourages users to stay connected.

As far as user feedback, seniors react most positively to six elements:

- making the initial one-on-one human connection
- developing skills with clear and practical values
- proceeding at their own pace
- having access to offline and online training materials
- experiencing the social aspects of group classes and learning, and
- having access to a computer and an Internet connection in their individual apartments.

By incorporating these insights and feedback into adoption programs, communities can help expedite a vast migration of our nation's seniors across the digital divide. ■CMR

Don Samuelson has worked in various capacities in law, public policy, and government-subsidized housing for 40 years. He has worked as a litigation associate at Kirkland & Ellis, the assistant dean at the University of Chicago Law School, the first assistant director of the Illinois Housing Development Authority, and the special assistant to the President of the Inland Steel Urban Development Company. For the past decade, he's concentrated on using on-site computer learning centers and broadband to build human capital in low-income housing communities.

MyWay Village CEO and co-founder Sarah O. Hoit was previously founder, chairman, and CEO of Explore, Inc., an afterschool education company which served over 75 schools in 9 states. Prior to founding Explore, Hoit played a major role in the development and implementation of President Clinton's AmeriCorps, the Corporation for National & Community Service. She has also been a managing director with Sylvan Learning Systems and a management consultant to senior management in multiple industries in corporate strategy, marketing, and communications.

Prior to becoming chief strategy officer at MyWay Village, Andrew Lowenstein was vice president of business development for Firefly Mobile, a venture backed start-up that sells simplified cell phones and related services for kids. Prior to joining Firefly Mobile, Lowenstein served as president of a private provider of consumer telecommunications services. He previously was senior vice president of sales and business development at Convey Software.

Who Can Convey Relevance?

BY TONY SHAWCROSS

In June 2009, the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life program reported that households who have yet to subscribe to broadband in the home list "relevance to their lifestyle" as the number one reason for their lack of use. More than price, availability, and usability combined, the primary factor preventing predominantly low-income communities from using broadband is the perception that the resource is not relevant to them. When our mainstream media and marketing systems are designed to deliver eyeballs to advertisers or connect consumers with marketers, it should be no surprise that low-income communities are left out. When the per-capita buying power of a community is low, the profit motive for targeting those communities is low.

Public access TV stations are uniquely positioned to address this barrier facing broadband adoption in the United States. Relevance for disadvantaged communities cannot be conveyed by the marketing departments of Internet service providers, because the best people to convey that relevance are people *within* those communities. Public access TV stations are already working within disconnected communities, with a unique capacity and motivation to educate and engage disadvantaged communities. We have an opportunity to integrate broadband-powered Web 2.0 technologies into every aspect of public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access operations. This integration of broadband could transform our members into early adopters for their communities, and support them in generating media content that conveys broadband relevance for their communities in a way no one else can.

Collectively, we have an opportunity to amplify the perspectives of diverse, vulnerable communities that have never before been engaged in the broadband conversation. All public access TV stations have expertise in helping disadvantaged communities craft media and make their voices heard through the media. Access to affordable training and tools is sorely lacking, excluding wide swaths of the population from the benefits of the digital media revolution. The demographics of YouTube skew to the privileged middle and upper-middle class. Households without camcorders and broadband access are either left out or left working with public access stations that often cling singularly to cable TV distribution.

While a few stations have embraced the Internet and are leveraging it to serve their communities, a scan of PEG websites reveals that very few post each of their shows online. So while we represent a valuable and unique link to communities few others can match, we are not serving the role we could to expose our constituents to the promise that broadband represents for their lives.

All public access TV stations have expertise in helping disadvantaged communities craft media and make their voices heard through the media.

The Open Media Project

The Open Media Project is a set of open-source tools designed to put local perspectives online and place communities in charge of their own media. It's more than just getting content online, it's enabling the community to really run their community TV station, drive the programming schedule, cooperate on projects, and interact around every aspect of the station. In addition to expanding the community's role, the model has made it possible to operate a successful public access TV station with no operating support.

In Denver's low-income communities, the user-driven approach has proven effective at providing incentives for individuals to encourage their friends and neighbors to get online, watch media produced in their neighborhood, and vote on it so that their shows earn repeat

Tony Shawcross is the founder and executive director of the Open Media Foundation (OMF). In 2006, Shawcross and the Open Media Foundation (then Deproduction) re-launched public access TV in Denver with Denver Open Media. Lacking operational support, OMF designed a crowd-sourced model for community TV, enabling viewers and members to schedule the channels, reserve equipment, submit TV shows, and access DOM facilities without depending on OMF staff. Merging traditional public access models with emerging Web 2.0 approaches, the foundation has designed a suite of open-source tools that give communities more direct control over their media.

airings and more prime-time exposure. The Open Media Project requires an investment of time and money, but the cost savings of off-loading responsibilities to community members results in savings that far outweigh the costs—at least for organizations willing to hand over some of that control.

The Open Media Foundation is nearing the end of our beta test of the Open Media Project, from which we learned—among other things—that our partners need more self-contained solutions. Our recent NTIA Broadband Telecommunications Opportunities Program (BTOP) proposal included the development of a more plug-and-play hardware and software solution, although use of the tools would still require a shift in operations to expand community involvement through the Internet. The BTOP proposal includes support for participating stations to encourage the production of content specifically related to broadband relevance in their community, with that content being compiled into a national TV series aired on Free Speech TV via both DishNetwork and DirecTV.

Whether the Open Media Project's BTOP proposal is funded or not, we hope to work with PEG stations around the country to broaden the role and relevance of public access in broadband reform. Many stations have shown that the kind of upheaval we experienced with Denver's removal of funding for public access operations is not necessary to bring about change in an access station.

RESOURCES

Open Media Foundation
www.openmediafoundation.org

Open Media Project
www.openmediaproject.org

Free Speech TV
www.freespeech.org

John B. Horrigan, *Home Broadband Adoption 2009*, Pew Internet & American Life Project, June 17, 2009, www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/10-Home-Broadband-Adoption-2009.aspx

Michael Schudson and Leonard Downie Jr., "The Reconstruction of American Journalism," *Columbia Journalism Review*, October 19, 2009, www.cjr.org/reconstruction/the_reconstruction_of_american.php

Robert W. McChesney and John Nichols, *The Death and Life of American Journalism: The Media Revolution That Will Begin the World Again*, Nation Books, 2010, www.nationbooks.org/book/200

Scholars and media professionals alike agree that the failure of traditional media models provides an unprecedented opportunity to remake the media landscape and to strengthen its public service role, which has for so long been overshadowed by the profit motive (McChesney and Nichols; Schudson and Downie). The more we work together and learn from each other's successes and failures, the stronger we become as a community and the more power we can lend toward strengthening public media. ■CMR

Summary of reasons dial-up *and* non-internet users cite for not having broadband at home

	% of dial-up + non-online users	% of all adults
Relevance (not interested in getting online + nothing could get me to switch + too busy + other unspecified reasons)	50%	13%
Price (price must fall + too expensive + no computer)	19%	5%
Availability	17%	4%
Usability (difficult + waste of time + too old + physically unable)	13%	3%

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project April 2009 Surveys. Number of cases for dial-up and non-Internet users=643.

Sustainable Broadband Adoption: ZeroDivide's Strategy to Maximize Federal Dollars

BY LAURA EFURD

The Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) is the first major federal effort in almost a decade to support information technology infrastructure, capacity building, and adoption in unserved and underserved communities in the United States. For ZeroDivide, it provides an opportunity to apply technology adoption lessons we've learned in California's underserved communities in other states.

ZeroDivide is a 501(c)(3) public foundation that has invested more than $45 million over the past 10 years in innovative programs that encourage sustainable adoption of technology, including broadband connectivity, in underserved communities. ZeroDivide provides financial support, capacity building, and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations that benefit low-income, minority, immigrant, non-English speaking, LGBT, aged, and disability communities.

Over the years, we have learned that access and affordability are key issues driving broadband adoption in unserved and underserved communities. These, however, are not the only issues. An additional set of complex barriers to adoption varies among different populations, and cannot always be resolved with a one-size-fits-all approach. These include relevant content and applications, language hurdles, access to computers and equipment, training and technical support, and privacy and security.

The most successful technology adoption programs have employed community-generated solutions implemented by organizations that are born and bred within the communities they serve.

In implementing BTOP, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has to balance support for local community-based programs with their desire to support solutions at a national scale. In order to scale national efforts, it seems logical to work with large networks of similar organizations, like libraries and schools. However, in many communities, the organization taking the lead on technology adoption may be a small nonprofit, a service agency, a community media organization, or even an arts organization. One of our major concerns with the federal program is whether the monies will get to those organizations that have gained both experience working with and the trust of the most disadvantaged and underserved communities. Many of these groups do not have the capacity to apply for federal grants.

To address these concerns, ZeroDivide decided to apply for BTOP funds and proposed an intermediary strategy that would aggregate broadband adoption programs throughout a number of states that may not be able to seek federal funds on their own. We started by conducting outreach in 16 states, starting with California's neighbors in the west, and in states that we knew had strong community technology networks.

In the end, our application included 44 community-based organizations throughout 13 Western, Midwestern, and Northeastern states. Our approach was to support people with experience in promoting technology adoption in underserved communities and aggregate their efforts in one BTOP application. ZeroDivide would function as fiscal agent for these organizations, who likely could not apply on their own. It would also provide technical support and build community among the partners across geographies and populations to share lessons learned and best practices, and

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leverage our network resources to provide a scalable range of resources to the partners.

ZeroDivide focused on four program areas through which to increase broadband adoption:

- media production and distribution
- online curriculum development
- civic engagement, and
- technology capacity building.

Prospective partners included community organizations of all types and sizes: service organizations, community media access stations, universities, afterschool programs, and grassroots organizers. Examples of our partners included:

- Community media access stations that would provide training on media production and other broadband applications to low-income youth and adults
- A grassroots Spanish radio station for immigrant workers in rural Oregon that would establish wireless networks in immigrant housing and train workers on using the Internet
- An arts organization that would train both artists and consumers to use an e-commerce site for local artists in rural Washington
- A Native Hawaiian education nonprofit that would utilize a network of churches to provide computer training and access to seniors so they could access online content in the Native Hawaiian language, and
- A media production organization training incarcerated youth on media production and broadband applications.

Through such a large-scale effort, ZeroDivide would be able to quickly expand its work, which had been confined to California to date. In addition, the NTIA would have a mechanism to fund local efforts through an intermediary that could establish uniform data collection and evaluation criteria.

Unfortunately, the ZeroDivide application did not get funded in the first BTOP application round. Without meaningful feedback from the NTIA, we could only guess at the reasons why we were not funded. Although with 350 applications in the adoption category competing for a handful of awards, it may have just been the luck of the draw.

We decided to submit a scaled-down version of our original application in the second BTOP round, focusing specifically on organizations training young people on media production and other broadband applications. We hope that a concentrated effort on one adoption strategy across a specific region will be more attractive to the federal funders.

Regardless of whether ZeroDivide eventually receives BTOP funds, we have learned a great deal through this process. We have gained knowledge about the scope of the need in underserved communities throughout the country and the organizations doing the tough work on the ground to help our most vulnerable communities utilize broadband to impact their lives. We are committed to doing this work in the long term and what we've learned through the BTOP process will inform our efforts moving forward.

Key Lessons Learned Through BTOP

- Technology adoption programs have been in serious decline since the heyday of the digital divide.
- Many nonprofit organizations that are on the front lines of serving the most disadvantaged and vulnerable community members have not been able to fully take advantage of broadband and broadband applications.
- Relevant community content continues to be a key driver of broadband adoption. Therefore, community media organizations—including the cable access community—have a key role to

play in developing broadband adoption strategies.

- BTOP will only be able to address a small slice of broadband deployment and adoption in the United States. Therefore, a long-term comprehensive strategy, such as the Federal Communications Commission's recent National Broadband Plan, must be employed.
- Intermediaries are needed to help distribute funds to smaller, community-based organizations, provide technical assistance, facilitate peer-networking, highlight best practices, and aggregate results. ■CMR

As vice president and chief community investment officer at ZeroDivide, Laura L. Efurd is responsible for all of the foundation's programmatic work, including grants, initiatives, and policy development and implementation. Efurd has over 15 years of legislative and public policy experience. In the Clinton administration, she served as deputy assistant to the President and deputy director of the White House Office of Public Liaison. She coordinated legislative activities around employment and training issues as associate director of legislative affairs for the U.S. Department of Labor. Efurd was legislative director to the late Congresswoman Patsy T. Mink of Hawaii. She serves on the Federal Communications Commission Consumer Advisory Committee and the Board of Trustees for the Patsy Takemoto Mink Foundation for Low-Income Women & Children.

This Is What Victory Looks Like

■ BY JOSHUA BREITBART AND SASCHA MEINRATH

Now that participation in content production has become widespread, we need to push beyond content to achieve democratic participation in shaping the communications infrastructure itself.

Public access has long carried the burden of bending a broadcast system into a participatory medium, trying to turn a one-way street into a public park. As more and more people take up this task and become active producers of media instead of just consumers of it, the role of public access centers can grow. The achievements of our day, bringing the power of multimedia production to countless millions of people, give us the opportunity to achieve much deeper participation—not just in the content we see, but in our communications infrastructure itself.

The broadcast model, as epitomized by cable television, incorporates command and control elements—a few points where content can be queued for distribution on the network using specialized equipment. Often, these central distribution nodes have made the process of participating in media production a needlessly complicated process. Public access centers have struggled against this centrally controlled structure and a culture of consumption to achieve a more democratic vision of the media—one in which everyone can exercise his or her right to communicate.

In truth, the broadcast system, while making participation in the media laborious, has made public access all the more essential. Centralization of content management meant that the communication loop ran straight through the public access center. If local residents wanted to add content to the network, they had to come to the center and participate in a community-based process of media production. They were also reliant on the specialized technical knowledge of center staff and had to go through the center's training program before becoming a producer. This process built meaningful relationships and developed powerful skills, but it also created dependencies.

Today, the ability to add content to our communications networks is commonplace, not requiring a single point of entry. A cable system that was designed for analog broadcast can now support Internet protocol-based two-way or peer-to-peer communication. Similar technological transformation has greatly expanded the capacity of our phone lines and cellular networks, multiplying the number of potential platforms for multimedia distribution. And the price and complexity of video equipment have dropped dramatically, to the point where basic production capacity now comes embedded in our computers and mobile phones. Increasingly, people expect their media to be interactive. Every day, even without specialized training, more people start producing multimedia. For those of us—like public access practitioners—who were pioneering user-generated content long before the term existed, this is a substantive victory.

Certainly, the traditional role of public access continues, since broadband adoption and participation in content production is uneven across society, correlating with historic injustices in wealth and economic opportunity. Broadband subscribers can now distribute video from their homes, but those who still see cable as their primary medium need a public access center to take a direct role in shaping the content they consume.

Still, now that participation in content production has become widespread, we need to push beyond content to achieve democratic participation in shaping the communications infrastructure itself. Public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access, which grew out of democratic participation in the local franchising process and has consistently driven

public engagement in franchise renewals, has a historic role to play, but there are also challenges.

Addressing Key Issues

In the policy realm, the shift to a multi-platform world means the PEG community must go from focusing on a fairly specific slice of media policy—cable franchising—to having near-boundless concern for issues affecting not just broadband, but also cellular phones, spectrum licensing, and communication standards. The only way to meet the challenge will be to collaborate with others in community media, sharing knowledge and combining political power. While the political agenda for community media will be broad, there are some key areas of focus for public access centers and opportunities for leadership.

If access can be in the home, then we need to make sure it is in every home where people want it. Especially where the cable provider is also the leading Internet service provider, the PEG community can bring its expertise in holding local service providers accountable to organize against technological redlining, where companies deploy new networks or services in wealthy areas and bypass poor communities.

Even though we may have media production capacity in our home or pocket, we still need community. Since the earliest newspapers first gave an audience a sense of collective experience, one of the core roles of media has been to help us develop a shared identity.

We still need institutions to bring us together and encourage us to use our media-making power to do more than simply tell our individual stories. In the world of YouTube and iPhone, we still need a "we."

In building new broadband networks, we need to make sure that people see community media centers as anchor institutions on par with schools, libraries, and hospitals. In the information age, community media centers are as vital for education, knowledge-sharing, and well-being as these traditional sites. We need networks that tie them together.

In areas where access is available, we still see disparities in adoption. Some people value interactivity more than others—or can afford it more easily—and they are migrating to the Internet. People for whom cable television is still their primary video medium need support and encouragement more than ever, as media production skills become increasingly essential for full participation in society. Public access advocates must convince policymakers that media production is a critical job skill, so we can fund the necessary outreach and training through workforce development programs.

Changing the Communications Architecture

As with the content, the architecture of our communication networks can define our sense of community. Community media advocates should promote the deployment of local area networks and intranets that support local media and promote neighbor-to-neighbor communication. Municipal area networks connecting local residents and institutions open up whole new worlds of applications:

- Live streaming service from connected locations, such as a parade or a high school gymnasium
- Remote access to a comprehensive local media archive
- Interactive public transportation displays, and
- Telecommuting and distributed workplaces, allowing for flexible work hours and cross-sector collaboration.

Technically, you can do any of these things on Comcast's or Verizon's network, but the cost of paying their rates for bandwidth at both ends of the communication makes doing so prohibitively expensive. Fewer corporate-controlled chokepoints will also lead to lower-cost Internet access for everyone in the community.

As made clear in the Federal Communications Commission's National Broadband Plan, which laid out a central role for broadband ac-

cess over cellular networks, we must also address issues in wireless broadband. Policymakers need to know that we expect public access to the airwaves in the form of unlicensed spectrum. We can take advantage of this for mobile phones with the ability to construct our own Global System for Mobile (GSM) communications networks, the most common standard for connecting mobile phones. In addition to advocating for the policies that support these technologies, public access centers can become local, hands-on laboratories for learning about and tinkering with technology.

Cell phone consumers have become accustomed to having their device, applications, and network tied together into a tight bundle. However, this arrangement gives enormous gatekeeping power to the service provider. Ending handset exclusivity, which allows companies to tie devices to specific networks, would increase consumer freedom and allow for more innovation in handsets. If we can teach people how to use and modify open-source operating systems and applications, as opposed to relying on walled gardens like Apple's App Store, then more people can directly shape their means of communication.

The confluence of technological, political, and cultural forces gives us a rare opportunity. Public access centers that have experience with community outreach and explaining complex technologies can use those skills to bring new constituencies into crucial media policy debates. What we decide today will determine whether our participation is limited to the production of content or extends to the very form of our communication infrastructure. ■CMR

As senior field analyst for the Open Technology Initiative (http://oti.newamerica.net) at the New America Foundation, Joshua Breitbart learns how people adopt new technologies and participate in discussions of telecommunications policy. He directs this knowledge into the initiative's efforts to strengthen broadband deployment, adoption, and utilization. Breitbart was formerly the policy director for People's Production House, which provides media education in New York and Washington, DC. He was formerly the communications director for Media Tank in Philadelphia, and, from 2002 to 2007 was an organizer of the Allied Media Conference, based in Detroit. He has extensive experience in participatory media, having worked in print, web, and video, including co-founding Brooklyn's Rooftop Films in 1998.

Sascha Meinrath is the director of the New America Foundation's Open Technology Initiative and has been described as a "community Internet pioneer" and an "entrepreneurial visionary." He is an expert on community wireless networks, municipal broadband, and telecommunications policy. In 2009 he was named one of Ars Technica's Tech Policy "People to Watch" and is also the 2009 recipient of the Public Knowledge IP3 Award for excellence in public interest advocacy. Meinrath is a co-founder of Measurement Lab, a distributed server platform for researchers around the world to deploy Internet measurement tools, advance network research, and empower the public with useful information about their broadband connections. He also coordinates the Open Source Wireless Coalition, a global partnership of open source wireless integrators, researchers, implementors and companies. Meinrath has worked with Free Press, the Cooperative Association for Internet Data Analysis (CAIDA), the Acorn Active Media Foundation, the Ethos Group, and the CUWiN Foundation. He blogs regularly at www.saschameinrath.com.

TELVUE
Turn it On

THE **MOST INNOVATIVE** PEG STATIONS **CHOOSE** TELVUE

Portland Community Media (PCM) in Oregon prides itself on being a professional-level media center offering professional-grade resources, staff, and services. In August 2008, the Community Broadcast Station made the decision to migrate from tape-based playback to a file-based system. PCM purchased two four-channel **TelVue Princeton B3400 Broadcast Servers**, a S3150F 12TB RAID storage, and a couple of C500 encoding workstations. The encoding workstations were attached to dub racks to facilitate encoding of video from all formats of tape that the facility has historically supported. PCM also purchased six updated computers to use as public Internet computers as well as stations where producers could import multiple DVDs at once. Leveraging TelVue's Developer API, PCM crafted their own injest application for producers to transfer DVDs, along with full MPEG files.

The Result: It now takes producers half the time to submit shows, and drastically decreased the monetary investment producers have to make before submitting programs to PCM. Additionally, dramatically reduced production workflow has enabled PCM to actively research and act upon new opportunities for distribution. PCM has made an **organizational shift** from being focused on technology requirements and limitations to being focused on **fulfilling their mission**.

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16000 Horizon Way, Suite 500
Mount Laurel, NJ 08054
800.885.8886
www.telvue.com
sales@telvue.com

Alliance for Community Media

1100 G Street, NW, Suite 740
Washington, DC 20005

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Alliance for Communications Democracy

For more than 15 years, the Alliance for Communications Democracy has been fighting to preserve and strengthen access. Though the odds against us have been high, and the mega-media, corporate foes well-heeled and powerful, time and again we've won in the courts. We can't continue this critical work without your support. With the ramifications of the 1996 Telecommunications Act still manifesting themselves, and new legislation on the horizon, we must be vigilant if we are to prevail and preserve democratic communications. If not us, who? If not now, when? Please join the Alliance for Communications Democracy today!

Become an Alliance Subscriber for $350/year and receive detailed reports on current court cases threatening access, pertinent historical case citations, and other Alliance for Communications Democracy activities.

- Voting membership open to nonprofit access operations for an annual contribution of $3,000.
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- Alliance Associate $2500 – copies of all briefs and reports.
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Direct membership inquiries to ACD Treasurer Sam Behrend, Access Tucson, 124 E. Broadway Blvd., Tucson, AZ 85701, telephone 520.624.9833[x103], or email at sam@accesstucson.org

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